

MY AUNT PONTYPOOL.

A Nobel.

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CHAPTER I.

It was upon a dull untidy night in the early spring, so many years ago, that the objects of that time appear to the eye of memory like mountains through a mist—so many years ago, indeed, that we have but one landmark, whereby to guide ourselves back to that period, in all the bleak race-course of the past, namely, the battle of Waterloo, for it was a little before that event, that two gentlemen took their way from a house towards the south-western corner of Portman Square, and, entering Oxford Street, walked on in the direction of that populous and bellicose quarter of the great metropolis called St. Giles's. It had rained all day, and bade fair to rain all night, and the two walkers advanced pretty nearly alone over the broad flag-stones which were washed smooth and clear by the falling deluge, and along which the dim and lantern-like glass globes, then all unconscious of gas, shed long lines of smoky and unservicable light.

At the corner of Vere Street, they were just pausing in their advance, when a roll of wheels was heard, and rushing on through the dark night, came two blazing lamps, borne along before a splendid green chariot, by the impetus of two iron grays.

"Lady Mary bound for the opera!" said the shorter of the two; "do you not go there to-night yourself, Charles?"

"Not I!" answered the other, as they crossed over the street, after the carriage had rolled on; "I have a good deal to do to-night, and if I were to dress afterwards, I should but come in for the ballet, a thing I hate, especially when I have not heard the opera. It requires the music to make fools of us first, before the folly of the ballet is endurable."

"But will not Lady Mary think you remiss?" demanded his companion, with a smile, which was not altogether a

well-pleased, one either, while he examined the countenance of the other as well as the lamp-light would let him.

"Nonsense," replied his companion, "I thought you knew better. What is Lady Mary to me, or I to Lady Mary? We have loved each other like brother and sister from our cradle it is true, and shall, I trust, love each other like brother and sister to our grave: but never anything more, I can assure you; and why the world should make up its mind that Mary and I are to marry, when we have not the slightest thought of ever doing such a thing, I cannot understand."

"Perhaps because the world sees more clearly into your hearts than you do yourselves," replied the other, gravely.

"No, I can assure you," answered his companion, "Mary and I talked over the whole subject not a week ago, with the most perfect composure. I offered to leave town if the report annoyed her; but she said that the good-natured world would only say we had quarrelled; and so we fell upon a scheme which will answer better, and silence the great gossip for ever—namely, for one or the other to marry somebody else as fast as possible. We are both now looking about on every side to see if we can find any one to fall in love with."

"Then I will go to the opera directly, not to lose my chance," replied the other, laughing.

"No bad plan, upon my honour," answered his companion, more seriously, "and something more, my good friend, no one's chance is better!"

"Nonsense, nonsense, Charles!" he answered, "fortune! fortune! remember!"

"Well! go you to the opera!" replied the other, "for here I must leave you."

His companion cried, "Indeed!" for at that moment they stood at the end of a dull, narrow, irregular street, which then occupied a part of the ground whereon Regent Street now stands, and was called Swallow Street. His "indeed," therefore, smacked of real astonishment, when he found that his companion's steps were directed thither; and then, after a pause, he burst into a gay laugh, adding a young man's joke upon the subject of the expedition, and left him, turning back to his own lodgings, in order to follow good advice, and dress for the opera.

To the jest of his companion Charles Lacy made no reply, but walked on slowly till he came to the corner of

Hanover Street, then, turning into a street some way farther down, the name of which matters but little, he went on from house to house, examining each as he passed, till towards the narrowest part, and it was all narrow, a small shop window emitted sundry dim rays upon the street, proceeding from two thin tallow candles. Through the small panes of glass might be seen an indescribable variety of articles in confused array, of every kind, sort, and description, that can supply the daily wants of humbler classes, from bees' wax and bread to bacon and hogs' lard; but on a sheet of paper, which covered one of the panes of the window, was expressed what the proprietor of the shop considered as the choice and select wares of her shop. The inscription was somewhat to the following effect:—"Salt, pepper, vinegar, mustard and beer, Dutch drops and pickled salmon!"

Our friend drew a sigh as he looked at the house, but nevertheless, stopping at the shop door, he entered and asked a middle-aged woman, who was serving out a portion of yellow soap to a housemaid in pattens, whether Mr. Adair lodged there.

"Yes, sir," replied the woman; "be so good as to knock at the private door."

The stranger quitted the shop, and then perceived, what he had not remarked at first, that the shop had a private door, adorned with a small clean brass knocker, and bearing altogether an appearance of neatness superior to that of its twin-brother of the shop. He knocked accordingly.

The door was opened speedily by a good-looking maid-servant, of whom he again demanded whether Mr. Adair lived there, and whether he were at home.

"I will tell you in a minute, sir," replied the girl, leaving the inquirer with his umbrella dropping on the oil-cloth of the passage while she ran up-stairs, from the second landing-place of which was heard her voice the next moment speaking to some person on the first floor.

"A gentleman below wishing to know if you are at home, sir," said the female.

"Do you not see that I am at home?" replied a second voice, somewhat sharply. "Desire him to come up!"

The communication was soon made, and the stranger, slowly mounting the stairs, presented himself at a door which was held open for him by the maid, and entered a small drawing-room, the furniture of which was old, but

neat. Besides that furniture, however, which evidently belonged to the lodging, were one or two extraneous things which may as well be noted down here. There were several books neatly bound, one of Stodart's best pianos, a very handsome writing-desk, and a work-box of buhl which deserved the name of splendid: but besides all these, there were two other things in the room without which all the rest of the furniture were of no consequence. It contained two human beings, cut out of that wood whereof alone Fortune makes ladies and gentlemen, though, God knows, the capricious goddess sometimes scatters them about in strange places after she has made them. The gentleman had certainly seen fifty-five years roll by him, but was a fine-looking man, standing six feet high, and as erect as a tent pole. His hair was as white as snow, and not much of it; but it was equally spread over the surface of a fine-shaped head, and while it was raised a little, like a frill, at the top, it floated off in two silvery curls on either side, leaving exposed a broad, noble forehead, and a strong-marked but handsome countenance. The other tenant of the room was a lady, seated before the work-box which has had honourable mention, and busied with the things that it contained. She was young and beautiful—very beautiful, not alone in features, though they were as lovely as the lover most in love dreams of when he thinks that he is looking at his mistress; but she was beautiful also in complexion. Her form was as lovely as her face. The small foot, the slender ankle, the rounded limbs, the neck, the shoulders, were each and all as full of beauty as her face. But not either form, or feature, or complexion, or all joined together, had satisfied Nature when she made her—she had added the beauty of living animated grace to those limbs, and the beauty of expression to that countenance, so that all was harmony.

CHAPTER II.

THE old gentleman stood upright before his visitor, looking at him as he crossed the landing-place and entered the room, with that stare of perfect and inquiring unacquaintanceship with which we regard any *soi-disant* dear friend that we never saw before in all the days of our life—a sort of who-the-devil-are-you? look, which, in the present instance, a slight touch of irritation, proceeding from late and undeserved misfortunes, had engrafted upon a countenance and demeanour naturally courteous. The young lady had raised her eyes for a moment at the sound of the stranger's foot on the top step of the stairs, and seeing by the dim light of the maid's never-snuffed candle, a tall, dark figure looking straight into the room, she concluded that it was some one come on business to see her father, and dropping her eyes to her work she took no further notice, though a half-audible sigh now found its way through that sweet, small mouth as she applied herself to her task again.

The stranger, as he entered, looked first at the father, and then seeing the expression which we have tried to describe, turned his eyes to the daughter, and, whether it was that they, his eyes, liked that direction better, or were struck, or puzzled, or what, matters not; but they remained there so long—two seconds is a long visit for the eyes—that the father's aspect had deepened into a frown by the time his visitor had come within four feet of him.

"Colonel Adair, I presume!" said the stranger, and—while the old gentleman answered sharply, "Yes, sir, my name is Adair! what are your commands?" Miss Adair at the first sound of the stranger's voice looked up with a sort of start; and in a moment there was a bright glow spreading up into her clear fair brow and temples.

"I believe I must first apply to Miss Adair to introduce me to her father!" answered the visitor, who had marked the glance of recognition which his voice had called up, and had not failed to notice, with a thrill that made his breath come short, the glow by which that glance was followed. "This is Captain Lacy, sir," she said, turning to

her father, and at the same time giving their visitor her hand; "have you been long returned from France, Captain Lacy?"

"About a month," replied Lacy, while her father gazed at him from head to foot.

"Do me the honour of taking a seat, Captain Lacy," said the old gentleman, "I am happy to see you—though the situation of my family, and the abode to which I am obliged to confine my ambition, have made me avoid all society."

Charles Lacy coloured slightly, for the exception in his favour made by Colonel Adair was evidently one of politeness, at least so he construed it. "Notwithstanding the acquaintance with Miss Adair which I had the pleasure of forming at the house of our worthy rector," he replied, "I should not have intruded upon you, Colonel Adair, had I not had the plea of business—though I cannot but confess," he added, with a smile, "that of that plea I gladly availed myself."

"Shall I leave you, sir?" asked Miss Adair, looking somewhat anxiously towards her father; but Captain Lacy interposed, exclaiming, "Pray do not, Miss Adair; I may want you as a moderator between us. Your good father does not know me; and may treat me as a common man of the world, if you are not near to explain to him, every now and then, that Charles Lacy means exactly what he says."

The old gentleman smiled. "Yes, yes," he said, "I do know you, Captain Lacy. My good friend, Doctor Bellingham, has taught me that, amongst other things worth knowing; and I too say what I mean, when I assure you that I am happy to make your acquaintance, although not in a happy moment or a happy mood."

"I trust, my dear sir," replied Lacy, as he took a seat, as near as he could do so without any very evident manœuvring, to Miss Adair, "I trust, my dear sir, that you may not find the moment of so unhappy a character as you suppose, and that your mood may improve with it."

"As for myself," replied the old man, raising his head half an inch higher, "misfortune, Captain Lacy, could never sink my spirit, or oppress my heart; but," he added, casting himself heavily into a chair, "I have a child, Captain Lacy, and I cannot bear the thought of her being deprived of all the comforts and little elegancies of life by the fault of a d——d scoundrel;" and he stamped his foot upon the floor somewhat sharply. "I am a fool,"

he continued, catching his daughter's eye turned anxiously towards him, "I am a fool, I know, to give way thus, but still it is hard to have borne up against some crosses in life with calmness and resignation, to have confined one's ambition to independence and mediocrity, when one was born to wealth and rank, to have avoided all repining, and willingly and knowingly to have shut the door against that class of society with which one was educated to mingle, and then to see oneself deprived of that very medium to which one had stinted all one's hopes and aspirations."

"It is, indeed, very hard, my dear sir, and difficult to be borne," replied Captain Lacy; "and I am afraid," he added, with some hesitation, "I am afraid that my father may have appeared to act with some degree of harshness in this business."

"Not at all, sir!" replied the old officer, at the same time struggling hard to suppress all acerbity in his tone, though the feelings of his heart did still render his voice as dry as a roll of Latin poets fresh from Herculaneum. "Not at all, sir, that I see! He did nothing more than he had a right to do; not even that, indeed. It is true, sir, he did resume the farm which I had the honour of renting from him; and he did order the stock of the farm, and furniture of the house, &c., to be sold by auction; but as that sale only produced one year's rent, while I owed him two, Lord Methwyn might, by a proper process at law, have secured my person—might have sent me to gaol, sir! and all very right and proper too, doubtless. Had I done so two years ago, sir, to my rascally agent, when he told me that by leaving my little property in his hands I should save him from ruin, and make his fortune for life, I should not have been left penniless in my old age, and more—your father's debtor to the amount of eleven hundred pounds. However, sir, your father, sir, shall be paid every farthing; there is, thank God, no chance of his losing the money."

"I feel perfectly sure of that, my dear sir," replied Captain Lacy; "and my father expresses himself excessively sorry for the harsh measures which have already been pursued. He says, indeed, that Mr. Williamson, the attorney"—now for reasons best known to himself, Captain Lacy had been guarded in his assertions respecting his father, making use of the words, "He expresses himself," and "He says, indeed," without at all adopting the tale as

his own ; but no sooner did he mention the name of the attorney, than the old gentleman began to beat the toe of one boot against the toe of the other with an excessive degree of rapidity, and Miss Adair took advantage of a slight and evidently embarrassed pause on Lacy's part to reply, "Oh, indeed, no ! Captain Lacy ; there must have been some mistake between Lord Methwyn and his lawyer. Mr. Williamson and his family behaved in the kindest and most considerate manner to us."

"It is to him, sir," added Colonel Adair, in a calmer tone than either his daughter or Captain Lacy expected ; "it is to him, sir, that we are indebted for the permission to remove such articles as that piano, that work-box, those books, and other things. They being my daughter's own property, presents from a relation now no more, Mr. Williamson conceived that the harshest construction was not to be put upon Lord Methwyn's letter, although the law, the just and wise law of England, might have brought them also to the hammer."

Captain Lacy's cheek turned red and white more than once, and there was no slight degree of embarrassment apparent in his whole demeanour while Colonel Adair spoke ; but the moment the other had finished, the embarrassment was at an end.

"I am excessively sorry," he replied, looking up frankly, "that such measures should have been used at all, and my father expresses himself equally sorry. Did he not do so, indeed, the grief that I feel would be doubled. The past, of course, I cannot repair, Colonel Adair ; but I wish to God that I had known Colonel Adair sufficiently long and intimately to render it no impertinence for me to meddle with the future."

Miss Adair looked up with a smile for a single instant, and then, as she saw that Lacy was turning his eyes with an inquiring, perhaps an entreating look, from her father to herself, she instantly resumed her work, and a slight blush fluttered over her cheek. Colonel Adair was a gentleman. I mean, not alone a man whose ancestors had been great amongst the children of earth, nor one who had mingled with men of polished manners all his life, nor one who had received a good education and profited by it ; but rather one, who, with all these advantages, possessed originally a gentlemanly heart—that rare and inestimable jewel, which, besides being a talisman that guards us from all that is base and evil in ourselves, acts as the finest touch-

stone for the discovery of true gold in others. Upon this touchstone the words, and manner, and character of Captain Lacy left a clear, defined, and brilliant mark which there was no mistaking, and that which he would have repelled with icy haughtiness in many another, Colonel Adair now heard with a mild smile, gentle and courteous, but not without a touch of natural pride in its composition, which made him refuse without scorning a proposal which sprang from feelings that he could appreciate and admire.

"No, no, my dear sir, that cannot be," he replied; "but still, Captain Lacy, I am grateful for the interest that you take in me and mine; and though I in no degree presume to blame your father's actions, I may be permitted to say, that I do not in the least mingle you up therewith. Have you taken tea? I cannot do without the Chinese drug. Helen, my love, ring for tea."

Captain Lacy, though he detested tea, resolved to stay and drink twenty cups thereof, if necessary, for he understood all the feelings of the old man's heart; and saw that the lingering posts of pride would end ere long under the influence of society, especially if he carried on his approaches cautiously against the last of the enemy's entrenchments. He first, therefore, determined to endeavour to send pride out riding in a different direction, and consequently while Miss Adair rang for tea, and prepared it in the best manner that the conveniences of a lodging would permit, he sat and talked to her father upon genealogy, asking whether he were not connected with the Lord Adair he had met not long before in Paris.

"He is my first-cousin," replied the old gentleman; "and though weak and avaricious, not a bad man, I believe: but we have not met or heard of each other for more than twenty years; and time changes our hearts as well as our faces, Captain Lacy."

"It does; indeed, my dear sir," replied Lacy; "but the character of Lord Adair remains much the same as you have depicted it. He has the credit of being miserly to an extraordinary degree; and when I saw him, was living in Paris, not at all in a manner corresponding to his rank and station. The family is very old, I believe; is it not?"

"As an old song!" replied Colonel Adair, smiling. "Robert Adair, of tuneful repute, was, I fancy, the founder of the family. I am sorry to hear that my good cousin's parsimony extends so far as to deny himself

what is right. Such was not his character when I knew him."

"He was living with a single servant, in a third floor," rejoined Lacy; "and dining daily at a cheap ordinary. He himself declared that he came to Paris for economy; but others said that his fortune was very large, and, of course, increasing."

"Large indeed, Captain Lacy!" replied Colonel Adair. "It consisted, in fact, of two fortunes—the original family property; and a second, which my grandfather made, or rather saved, in India, before he succeeded to the title. The latter was destined for me; but I lost it by doing the wisest thing that ever man did—by marrying that dear girl's mother. My grandfather's passion was pride; and having hesitated long whether he could most increase the family dignity by leaving his various estates to the heir of his title, or by creating another wealthy family of his own name, and giving the fortune he had saved in India to the younger branch, of which I was the representative, he had determined on the latter, when, lo, and behold! I one day had the perversity to marry a clergyman's daughter instead of the person he had chosen for me, and the whole estates were left to my cousin, upon condition that he never either saw or spoke to me after—which condition he has faithfully performed."

"I suppose you gave him no great encouragement to violate it," replied Captain Lacy; "a man who could take advantage of such a circumstance, could be no very desirable acquaintance."

"Certainly not," answered Colonel Adair; "I had enough for happiness—my pay and seven hundred a-year. All went well as long as I continued in active service; but I got terribly wounded at Albuera, quarrelled afterwards with Crawford, who was an excellent officer, but as hot as pepper; and retiring on half pay, fancied I could farm—which after all is a vice. The rest you know: I trusted to a rascal—took his advice in everything—left my money in his hands, and am ruined. It is a common case, Captain Lacy, I am afraid."

"But what is not a common case, my dear sir," replied Lacy, laying his hand kindly upon that of Colonel Adair, glad to have made so much progress, and resolved to push on while the gates of the citadel were open, "but what is not a common case is, that you, who have trusted implicitly to a rascal, will not now trust to an honest man. Colonel

Adair, I am resolved to be very obtrusive, nay, more, to bring the matter to an end at once, I will speak to you as an old soldier, and tell you that you must surrender at discretion; for there are three practicable breaches in your heart, and I can march in when I will.—Sir, the place is not tenable!"

Colonel Adair paused; for pride would fain have made him angry, but good feeling and good temper got a complete triumph; and his pause ended with a laugh, "Well, well, Captain Lacy," he said, "I do surrender—but what are the three breaches you talk of? I do not see how my heart should be so very indefensible."

"First, because the heart of a man of honour is seldom very sternly shut against a man of honour," answered Lacy; "secondly, I think I could make my way in through good Doctor Bellingham, who wrote to me, telling me where you were, and assuring me of a kind reception; and had all failed, I should not have scrupled even to have taken Miss Adair by the hand, and have besought her to entreat her father to confide in me—in me—" Lacy paused and hesitated, but then added, "in one who would not wrong her intercession."

"More like three breaching batteries than three breaches," replied Colonel Adair; "but as I have capitulated I must say no more; and now, my dear sir, let Helen give you some tea, and we will talk more hereafter."

The only time when a man is justified in doing anything that is disagreeable to himself, is when he is intent upon doing a good action. Lacy therefore took the proffered tea, and while drop by drop he made it linger out for a full half-hour, he talked to Miss Adair of old friends, and old scenes, and old meetings, and to her father of changes, and politics, and war, and all the wonderful things of the last twenty years, till if you had given either of them one-half of the Grand Mogul's dominions, they could not have looked upon Captain Lacy as anything but an old friend. The way he managed it was, by speaking to them as an old friend himself, with that ease and suavity of manner which is so captivating, especially where it is joined to singular graces of person and mind. His tone, too, and his address were so perfectly those of a gentleman; his manners were so polished without being ceremonious; his demeanour was so much that of a man of high breeding and high rank, without even the slightest

sciousness of condescension, that the most irritable spot in the wounded heart of "fallen estate" would not have shrunk under that gentle touch. The polish of his manners was congenial to all the feelings of Colonel Adair and his daughter, because they were themselves people of high breeding; and Lacy contrived to act and speak towards them as if he were precisely in the very same rank and station of life with themselves, not a bit higher, not a bit lower, not a bit more or less fortunate or unfortunate, so that pride had not a foot of ground to stand upon against him; but he found as the time wore away, and the conversation continued upon indifferent topics, that he had committed an error in strategy when he suffered it to be diverted from the point. His manœuvres to recover his position however were skilful. First, he began to talk of the country in which Colonel Adair had lately been living, and then even of the farm which that gentleman had occupied under his own father. Thence he turned to farming in general, and laughing added, that he believed it was an occupation which should be left entirely in the hands of those who had been brought up to it.

"Perhaps you are right!" replied Colonel Adair, "and yet do you know, Captain Lacy, I was proceeding very successfully, when I was so unexpectedly stopped in full career. The first three years were certainly pure loss, but last year and the present, all that I had laid out on the land was beginning to bear very fair fruit, and I had every prospect of obtaining a very good return."

"Most unfortunate indeed that you should have been cut off from carrying on your proceedings; just when they were becoming successful," replied Captain Lacy; "but tell me, my dear sir, do you intend resuming the same pursuits?"

"How can I, my dear friend?" cried the old gentleman, almost crossly. "Did I not tell you that this rascal, this agent, this Jones Jenkinson, had absconded with everything he could carry off? The very furniture of his house, and the splendid plate on which he used to feed the gulls he plundered, were disposed of before he went. I tell you, my dear sir, he has not left me one farthing upon earth!"

"And yet you told me not long ago," replied Lacy, in a grave but kindly tone, "that it was your intention to pay my father the small debt you owe him immediately. Now, Colonel Adair, if you purpose doing anything rash and imprudent for the sake of discharging a claim which can

stand over for any length of time without inconvenience to any one, I can assure you——”

“It cannot stand over, my good young friend,” interrupted Colonel Adair, “without inconvenience to my honour, to my feelings, and to my peace. I tell you fairly, Captain Lacy, as I hold my half pay as Lieutenant-Colonel by purchase, it is my intention to sell out. The sum thus obtained will enable me to pay all I owe, and leave me some little thing to go on with till I can arrange some plan for the future.”

“Just what I expected!” answered Lacy, “and what I can assure you, you shall not execute if you have any value for the friendship of Charles Lacy—and I am vain enough, my dear colonel, to think his friendship worth having! Why, my dear sir, should you dream of selling out, when you can easily borrow the money—if you are resolved to pay a debt in regard to which there is no haste—when you can easily borrow the money at a much less sacrifice in the way of interest?”

“But who will lend me money without security?” asked Colonel Adair, with a melancholy smile. “No, no, Lacy; my plan is the only feasible one. When it is executed, I may show you how much I value your friendship, and how sincere I hold you, by asking your advice on my future fate—nay, perhaps by employing your interest, if you possess any.”

“What I have is at your service,” replied Lacy, “but still you must not, and shall not, sell out. You know not what can be done in London—I can let you have the money myself—but then seeing a quick rush of blood tinge the old man’s cheek with deeper red, while his eye wandered for a moment to his daughter, Captain Lacy went on, “but I will not press that, as it may be disagreeable to you. All I can tell you is, that these things are done every day in London, and that if you like to empower me to seek it for you, the money shall be in your hands before mid-day to-morrow, with nothing more than legal interest to pay for it, and no obligation to any one.”

“Infinite obligations to you, Captain Lacy,” cried Colonel Adair, grasping his hand, “and yet I cannot understand how you will manage it. Remember, I tell you, I have no security to give.”

“That is nothing,” answered Lacy, laughing, “I can assure you our young men of fashion, who have not only no security to give, but are also over head and ears in debt

already, find no difficulty in procuring money daily. Leave the matter to me! I pledge my word for it; and I think, my dear sir, that instead of selling your half pay, it will be much better for you to try and get into active service again."

"You are an enthusiast, Captain Lacy!" said Colonel Adair, calmly, "and your kindness makes you jump over obstacles which are insurmountable to my less sanguine reason. Even were we in the midst of war, I possess no interest sufficient to carry through what you propose; how much less can I hope for such a thing in the midst of profound peace, and at the end of long and severe hostilities, when the only thing thought of is reduction?"

"You have made me a most decided promise," replied Lacy, "to use my interest, such as it is; and as to war, I believe we are going to be gratified to the full of our most bellicose anticipations. Have you not heard that Napoleon Buonaparte has landed in Provence, and that as he marches towards Paris his forces are increasing every hour? There is even a report in town to-night that Marshal Macdonald has been defeated at Meulan, and it seems certain that Louis XVIII. has fled from Paris. War it would appear is inevitable, and of course a number of men must be called into active service. Why not you among the rest?"

"God grant it may be so!" cried the old soldier, but the sweet, soft colour in his daughter's cheek faded away as Lacy spoke, leaving her for a moment very pale. "Why, Helen, you are not afraid!" continued her father. "Fie! you are a soldier's child, my love, and should thank Captain Lacy as much as I do, for the prospect he holds out, and the kindness that prompts him."

"Indeed I do thank him most sincerely," replied Miss Adair, the colour coming back into her cheeks with more than its former brightness as she raised her eyes to Lacy's face; "and although I cannot but feel agitated and alarmed at such sudden tidings of a renewal of the war, yet my courage will come back, my dear father, depend upon it, when the moment of trial comes." Lacy gazed at her for a moment in silence, and then, suddenly casting his eyes to the ground, fell into a deep reverie which continued several minutes. The paleness which he too had marked, and the comment which her father's word had read thereon, led his mind on into the future, and busy fancy conjured up all the events which might follow from the

suggestion which he had that night made. That beautiful, that gentle, that interesting creature, he thought, might be left alone in the wide world, unprotected, unbefriended in consequence of the very plans he had formed for her benefit; and after a long pause Lacy took his leave, and promising to be with Colonel Adair again ere noon on the following day, walked slowly and thoughtfully back towards his home.

CHAPTER III.

TOOH! tooh! tooh! whooh! tooh! blew a man on a long tin horn (since put down by act of Parliament), and immediately after, there sounded a voice in Captain Lacy's ear, shouting in true stentorian cockney, a language, which, ere many years be over, will, it is feared, be utterly corrupt—"Great news; bloody news! third edition of the Evening Coury-ecr! paepah, your honour? great news, can assure you! that ere infernal warmint, Napolion Bony-party has taken Paris by storm! Take a paepah your honour?" Captain Lacy shook his head, and the man, putting his trumpet to his lips, rushed on with a most vengeful blast, calling up from areas, and out from hall doors, the inquiring faces of all the gods and goddesses of the lower regions, and every now and then stopping to sell some of the pepper and salt sheets of print, which derive their principal interest from the crimes, miseries, and follies of our fellow-creatures.

Scarcely had Lacy passed through Hanover Square and entered Bond Street—for, like all wise men, he had a mortal aversion to coming and going the same way—when the jingling of a ferocious pair of spurs struck his ear, and the next moment he was confronted with a bewhiskered and befurred young man, somewhat his junior in years, and inferior in size, who accosted him with a "Good evening, Captain Lacy!"

"Ah! good evening, Williamson," he replied, "I thought you were in the country with your friends. When did you arrive?"

"Only this morning," answered the other. "All this news from France made me think it high time to look about me; and as my father was coming up to settle some business with old Colonel Adair, I thought I might as well come too. You remember the old colonel and his pretty daughter! a beautiful girl, Helen Adair, by Jove!"

Lacy grew an inch taller: "Miss Adair I have had the pleasure of knowing some time," he replied, coldly; "her father I never met till to-night."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the other, "why, I thought you

must have known them very well. They have been tenants of your father's such a long while!"

"But you forget that I have been either in Spain or France almost the whole time," answered Lacy, in the same dry tone; "besides, as far as I can understand, Colonel Adair has only been in that farm four or five years."

"Aye, true!" answered the other, "I forgot! We knew them before—my father has known the old gentleman long, and his cousin, Lord Adair, too, even better. Lord Adair's son, you know, is a great crony of mine—we were schoolfellows—and he comes down to our place every year. But we were talking of Helen Adair—devilish fine girl! isn't she?"

"A very beautiful girl certainly," replied Lacy, "but nothing devilish have I seen either in her manners or her looks."

"Oh, that's only a way of speaking, you know," answered the other. "I must go and see them, 'pon my honour. She is really a beautiful girl—I shall burn my fingers there some day!—I know I shall—she is so very handsome."

The word "puppy!" almost escaped from Lacy's lips, but he restrained himself, and merely replied, "A man must be very foolish ever to burn his fingers knowingly. But, Mr. Williamson, will you do me the favour of telling your father, that should his business with Colonel Adair refer to any of my family's concerns, he had better suspend all proceedings, till he has spoken with Lord Methwyn on the subject. Where is your father to be found?"

"Oh, at the house in Hill Street!" replied the other; "our house in Hill Street!"

"I did not know that you had a house in town at all," answered Lacy; "that must be a new acquisition, surely!"

"Yes! last year!" replied the other, in the same coxcombical tone. "My father's business called him so often to London, and he is likely to have so many cases before the House of Peers, that he thought it best to buy a house in town, especially as my sisters are soon to be presented, you know."

"No! I did not know at all!" answered Lacy. "However do me the favour to tell your father what I have said. Lord Methwyn does not know he is in town, and wrote him a letter to-day to the effect I have mentioned, which letter

must have missed him. But I perceive clearly that there has already been some mistake between my father and yours, in regard to the proceedings which have taken place against Colonel Adair; and therefore to prevent anything more occurring of the same disagreeable nature, nothing further must be done till a full explanation has taken place. Good night!" and, turning on his heel, Lacy walked on, biting his lip, under the influence of manifold feelings, which we shall not pause to analyse.

On arriving in Portman Square, Lacy immediately proceeded to his own apartments, and dressed, which he had not done before dinner, as his father had dined out, and he himself had only shared his meal with an old military comrade. Over the arrangement of his toilet presided a personage, who, without being the most scientific valet who ever tied a cravat, was nevertheless well calculated to make his master's dress harmonise with his character, which is indeed the great art—or rather the true philosophy for a valet-de-chambre. He was silent and thoughtful, which suited Lacy well—not without genius in his own particular way, and with honesty tried by ten years' service with his present master, at home and abroad, in peace and in war. Very respectful in his demeanour, though long attendance upon Captain Lacy, in many scenes and circumstances, had purchased for him a certain freedom of speech when he chose to make use of the privilege.

On the present occasion he went on assisting Lacy in his toilet without uttering a word, and indeed, from the gravity that sat upon his master's countenance, it required no great skill to determine, that thought, and not conversation, was to be the order of the day. The world without was quiet also; for a momentary calm had fallen upon the general thunder-storm of London streets. The rush and the rolling, the trampling and the shouting, were still, and even the clanking step of the mud-defying patten was unheard, though Lacy's dressing-room overlooked the street. Lacy meditated in quiet, with the deep, anxious thought of one who, having chosen a determined part, and fixed his mind upon a certain object, sees before him an infinity of obstacles which will require time, and patience, and skill, and energy, and perseverance to overcome.

The reader may perhaps be puzzled to divine what difficulties, dangers, and un comforts could be lying in wait for the steps of a man in Charles Lacy's situation. He

commanded the H. troop of the — regiment of — dragoons ; but there was nothing very difficult in that. Then he was the only son of a peer, the heir of a large property, and already in possession of some four or five thousand a-year, which had descended to him from his mother. All these misfortunes, however, might be borne patiently, without covering oneself with the cloak of the Stoics, or even borrowing a rag from the tattered robe of Diogenes. But an event had happened to him. He had fallen really and sincerely in love.

Charles Lacy had for several years served with the army of the Peninsula, and when the war was suddenly brought to an end, he gladly returned for a short space to his own country. He found his father in town, but the sweet recollections of infancy and boyhood, and a disposition fond of nature's face, soon led him down to his family estates in the country. Those estates lay in a beautiful but remote spot, where Captain Lacy knew no one whose mind and tastes were at all upon a par with his own, except the rector of the parish ; and the rectory was consequently much more his abode while he remained in the country than his own paternal dwelling. The rector and his wife were old people, of an old family, and without children ; but it happened, that during her father's temporary absence, Miss Adair, who was to them as a child, had invited herself to spend a fortnight with Dr. and Mrs. Bellingham ; and it so occurred, that before the second day of that fortnight was over, Charles Lacy took up his abode in their neighbourhood. Charles Lacy saw Helen Adair every day, and Helen Adair saw Charles Lacy ; and from thinking her the most beautiful girl he had ever beheld, Lacy began to think her the most graceful and the most amiable, the sweetest and the best. What Helen Adair thought of him is another question, but certain it is that he was not in the least frightened at what he felt, and fancied that, like the changing moon, the bright thing that lit up the heaven of imagination would wane as it had waxed. It is wonderful how often under such circumstances being frightened is done by proxy ; and how frequently when a rich youth sits close and long beside the white satin petticoat of a poor beauty, or a great heiress listens complacently to the scarlet oratory of a lieutenant in a marching regiment, all the aunts, and cousins, and uncles, and mothers, are frightened beyond all conception as deputies for those in danger. The person who took the

liberty of being frightened upon the present occasion was no other than good Mrs. Bellingham, who saw all sorts of dangers and difficulties in the train of love between Charles Lacy and Helen Adair, and though she wisely resolved to do nothing to prevent a matter which is altogether an affair of destiny, yet she determined that he, Charles Lacy, should not walk about with his eyes shut any longer. Taking therefore the freedom of one who had known him from his youth, Mrs. Bellingham one day gave him a hint in a quiet, easy way that he was falling in love with Helen Adair; and the consequence was, that Lacy rode home in somewhat of a thoughtful mood. He felt that he was falling in love with Helen Adair, and as he was not one of those men who set about falling in love systematically whenever they find an opportunity, he only asked himself one question, which was, whether any just cause existed for his supposing that the heart of Helen Adair was as far entangled even as his own. To ascertain that fact he paid one more visit to the rectory, and convinced himself that if ever girl was heart whole, it was Miss Adair; though the first-named fortnight had now, by her father's prolonged absence, been extended to two. His resolution was instantly formed to quit England, and let the half-lighted fire go out for want of fuel. His determination was accordingly executed with vigorous promptitude. For several months he endeavoured, by mingling with all that was beautiful and graceful in the French capital, to dull the longing memory of that one fair face that haunted him in all the walks of life. At the end of that time, however, he felt that he loved Helen Adair more than when last he had seen her; and as this was the strongest proof in the world that his absence was doing him no good, he put himself into his carriage, and galloped back to England as hard as he could go.

Various matters kept him in London for a fortnight, during which time he wrote to his good friend, Dr. Bellingham, informing him of his return to his native land; and telling him that in a few days he would visit him in the country. Not a word did he say of Helen Adair; but Dr. Bellingham, who was a mild, quiet man, understood a great deal more of Charles Lacy's heart than Charles Lacy knew of; and his reply informed his young friend of all the harsh measures which had been pursued towards Colonel Adair, whose address in London the worthy rector took care to subjoin. Lacy's journey was ac-

cordingly postponed since die ; and the first fruits of the information he had received we have already seen.

Lacy loved ; but he had seen no very decided cause to believe himself loved in return ; and strange to say, even had he known that what he felt for Helen Adair was not without an answering voice in her heart, his perplexity would have been hardly less. So much was this the case indeed, that he hesitated whether by any means he should endeavour to ascertain what were her feelings towards him, at least ere the political storm, which he saw gathering over Europe, had burst. Such circumstances then might well furnish forth matter for deep thought, but there were a variety of other perplexities which shot across the texture of his fate, assuming a thousand different shades according to the lights in which they were viewed.

Lord Methwyn had, as Lacy well knew, a very gentlemanly love for money ; it went no further than that. He was not yet old enough, or stupid enough, or impotent enough, to be avaricious. He had a high respect, not so much for the wealth as for the things that the wealth gives,—the pleasures, the luxuries, the importance. Then he was proud too—not in the least haughty. He was a great deal too witty, and too wise, and too much of a gentleman to be haughty. No one is ever haughty but an upstart or a fool. Yet though in both these passions he was moderate, and never suffered them to lead him beyond a certain degree, still as far as they did lead him, he was perfectly inflexible. He was one of those men who are calm and cool in their determinations, calm and cool in their manners, and, as a good foundation for all sorts of gentlemanly proprieties, calm and cool in their hearts. He would have been as sorry to see his son perish in any way, as it was possible for him to be on any account ; but he would have seen his son perish twenty times over rather than yield one point on which he had decided. All this Lacy knew quite well, and therefore when the question was in regard to marrying a girl without a sixpence, in a small lodging, in a back street, many were his perplexities concerning his father.

Next came her father for consideration ; and although no two men on earth could be more different than the two fathers, Lacy, who entered into Colonel Adair's character almost intuitively, perceived that the most opposite qualities would lead him to be as intractable, in regard to this

business, as Lord Methwyn. He felt that Colonel Adair would shrink from the bare idea of marrying his poverty to Lord Methwyn's wealth, as he would from dishonour; and that if, under his present circumstances, he heard the slightest hint of an attachment between that lord's son and his daughter, he would instantly do some of those very noble-minded, but very foolish things, which by one hasty act destroy foundations on which, however unpromising, Time seldom fails to build up a solid fabric for happiness to dwell in. His perplexities, therefore, on this score also, would not have been small, even had they been complicated by no other affairs; but when he remembered the facts of Colonel Adair's debt to his father, and the collision which must thence ensue, he felt that all his care and all his prudence would be required to steer his bark aright amongst the troubled waves that surrounded it.

The next and greatest perplexity regarded Miss Adair herself. How was Lacy to steer his course with her? When he had quitted her in the country, he had made up his mind completely to the belief, that she was as yet totally indifferent to him. This may seem strange; and the learned reader may exclaim, "Why, every good-looking, gentlemanly young man thinks every girl under forty in love with him before he has spoken to her ten minutes;" and this sage general rule may be true, but every general rule has its exception, and Lacy was that exception in the present instance. When he quitted Dr. Bellingham's house, he did not think Helen Adair in love with him. Though he saw that she certainly did not dislike his society, yet he made a distinction between that feeling and love; and had he continued to entertain the same belief in her indifference, his perplexities might have been less. On that very evening, however, he had remarked, with the keen and anxious eyes of love, some passing emotions flit over the lovely countenance of Helen Adair, which caused strange feelings in his own breast. Lacy saw and felt it all, and from that moment, for the first time, fancied that he might have some small interest in the heart of Helen Adair.

It were in vain to say that such a hope was not delightful to him. It were vain to say that it did not make his heart beat joyously; but still, it brought its perplexities along with it. Lacy was not a man to trifle with the heart of woman for a moment. In her dealings with the ruder, the more powerful, and the less restrained part of the

race, woman has no defence against a thousand nameless ills, except in man's generosity. But Charles Lacy was the soul of honour, and he would have felt it to be as great a disgrace, where he had sought love, to trifle with it, as to falsify his word. What then could he do in regard to Helen Adair? If he hesitated to avow his love, he might keep her in that pain and that uncertainty which he would not have inflicted upon any woman, much less on one he loved; and yet if he avowed his love, and obtained an avowal of hers in return, he could not ask her to treat a kind and anxious father with unworthy want of confidence, and conceal from Colonel Adair a fact which so much affected the happiness of one in whom his own happiness was wrapped up. Were Colonel Adair once told of Charles Lacy's love for his daughter, might not his pride take arms at the very idea of the great disparity in the fortunes of their families, and with the usual conduct of pride in arms destroy the comfort of all around? He doubted it not, and the only question was how to avoid such a catastrophe. There was but one way, but that one way was somewhat harder than any of the labours of Hercules. By some means, Heaven knows what, to repair the ruined fortunes of Colonel Adair; at least so far as both to make him lose sight of any great difference of situation between himself and Lord Methwyn, and also to smooth the descent for his lordship's expectations for his son, from rich heiresses to a poor beauty, by removing all the little obstacles which might pique his pride as well as his worldliness; this was the only means which presented itself to Charles Lacy, and it may easily be perceived that the undertaking was nearly as weighty as that of Atlas. But Charles Lacy was in love, and what is there that he would not have done for Helen Adair? He had no very fixed plan upon the subject, it is true; but he possessed considerable interest and considerable influence with different people, and in different ways, and to use all his influence and all his interest to raise Colonel Adair rather than himself, was the general outline of his design.

In the meantime he resolved to let matters take their own course with her he loved, so to act and so to speak as to leave no doubt upon her mind in regard to the nature of his feelings towards her, trusting that her knowledge of his character and her confidence in his honour would be sufficient to guard her against anxiety and apprehension. To these conclusions his mind had just arrived, when his

body, acting under the mute guidance of his valet, had completed his toilet. Lacy stared from habit in the glass to see what he was like, and was then turning towards the door, when a rush of wheels and a thundering knock told of some arrival; and the next moment he heard his father's voice, and hastened down-stairs to meet him.

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLES Lacy was a man of undaunted courage. From sixteen to six-and-twenty he had been hardly a day without confronting an enemy, and from Torres Vedras to Toulouse he had walked on side by side with Wellington and victory. Charles Lacy was afraid of nothing upon earth—no, not even his own father; and though he knew very well, that they were just like two armies of observation at the expiration of a truce, upon the very brink of hostilities, he walked down calmly to meet him, and finding that he had taken up his position in the library, followed him thither.

Lord Methwyn was standing at the library table, laying down thereon a multitude of papers, some written, some printed, and bearing about with them strong marks of the House of Lords. The peer was nearly as tall as his son, and a good deal stouter, but well-made, and as yet, not at all corpulent. His leg was good, and his hand was white, and having been early in the service, he retained a strong military look, though he had retired many years, and at the time we speak of was never in the habit of committing any more flagrant martial iniquity, than reviewing a body of volunteers, or inspecting the yeomanry of the county. In those days, men in general dressed themselves like gentlemen when they went to attend the senate, and on the present occasion Lord Methwyn, who was always attentive to his dress, was attired with peculiar care.

The papers in his hand bore not only internal but external evidence of having found their way out of the House of Lords, for on the identical document which he was laying down, at the moment that his son entered, was inscribed in large letters, "An Act to amend an Act," which words he was reading over to himself with the peculiarly preliminary smile we have mentioned, as preceding something smart. As Charles Lacy's footstep caught his ear, he turned round, well pleased that it was not to be lost, and pointing with his finger carelessly, he read "an Act to amend an Act:—and thus it is every day, Charles," he continued; "our Acts are like our highways, no sooner made

than they want mending; and I'll tell you what, my dear boy, the lawyers are the tollmen, who stop every one according to law, and take a fee, ere they let them pass."

"Your lordship is severe," said Lacy, "but I suppose you come from the House, where, from all I hear, sharp words are somewhat common."

"'Twill soon be a bear garden, Charles," replied his father, "nay, it is already! One great leader bounds on his curs upon another, till all parties are tired and hurt."

"Was there anything new going forward?" demanded Lacy, whose thoughts were somewhat busy with the approaching war.

"Oh nothing new!" replied his father; "it is the last place on earth where information takes up its abode, Charles; but have you not been at the opera? That is a much better place for news."

"No, I did not go," replied Lacy, finding that it was time to bring the conversation to the point he wanted to reach; "I went to see old Colonel Adair, on whose affairs good Dr. Bellingham wrote to me yesterday."

"Aye, poor old gentleman! he made a bad speculation of his farm, I am afraid," replied the peer, in a very different tone from that which Lacy had expected to hear him employ. "Williamson gives a very bad account both of his affairs and his prudence."

"Are you sure, my dear sir, that Williamson is not a great rascal?" demanded his son.

"No, no!" replied the peer, "I am afraid he is not—I do not feel sure he is."

"Afraid not!" cried Lacy, "why, my lord, you would not wish for a rascal in such a capacity, surely!"

"Why not?" demanded his father, with a smile; "rascals can only hurt the poor or the confiding, and I am neither the one nor the other, you know. No, no, Charles, a rascal is a very good sort of a person when properly managed. Only make it his interest to serve you, and he'll serve you well. No, no, give me a good rascal! But I am afraid Williamson is but a poor foolish honest man."

"I do not feel quite so sure of that fact as your lordship seems to be," replied Charles Lacy, "but at all events, in regard to Colonel Adair, he has acted with extreme harshness, as your lordship admitted when I spoke of the matter yesterday. He not only ejected Colonel Adair from the farm in the harshest manner, but sold off all that

the house contained, or that covered the ground; that too at a moment when he knew that Colonel Adair was in temporary difficulties from the failure of his agent, and when the firm itself was in the most flourishing state. Was not this going very far in severity?"

"A great deal further than I intended, Charles, or could have wished," replied his father. "He wrote me a long story upon the subject, setting forth the imprudence of Colonel Adair, the long arrear of rent, the hopelessness of his paying, &c., and I in return simply bade him do what was necessary to secure the ultimate discharge of the debt: but at the same time I told him, that though it was necessary to prevent any one of my tenants from setting all the rest the bad example of never paying me, yet I would have no unnecessary severity."

"Well, then, Williamson is a rascal, my dear sir," replied Lacy, "and I shall take the liberty of telling him so next time I see him. Instead of acting as you directed, he did use the most unnecessary severity, and not only did that, but declared that every blackguard act he committed was by your immediate order, affecting all the time the greatest friendship for Colonel Adair and his family."

"If he has done that, I shall reprimand him," replied the peer; "but remember, my hot son, that you have but the word of the person who is smarting, to prove all this. There is occasionally such a thing as another side to the question. Williamson may have found the measures he took absolutely necessary, and this Colonel Adair may have made his story good to you, by a concealment of some of the facts, and a distortion of others. We see the case every day with poor gentlemen who are very much wronged by their creditors."

"Colonel Adair, my dear sir, is a gentleman, a soldier, and a man of honour," replied Charles Lacy, "and it needs but five minutes' conversation with him, to see that there is not a shadow of turning in his whole nature."

"I know nothing about him, Charles," replied Lord Methwyn, coolly, "except that he never called upon me when I was in the country—never mingled with the other gentlemen in the county—except Dr. Bellingham indeed—and therefore I took it for granted that he did not feel himself in that rank of society which would warrant his associating with those whom colonels in the army generally mix with. Is he a colonel of volunteers, or fencibles, or what?"

"He was long lieutenant-colonel of the ——— regiment," replied Lacy, "served in the Peninsula with high honour, was severely wounded at Albuera, and is first-cousin to Lord Adair, a cousin of Mary's, and therefore a distant connexion of our own."

"Indeed! indeed!" exclaimed Lord Methwyn, raising his eyebrows; "that changes the whole complexion of the affair. I shall certainly reprimand Williamson severely, especially if he have presumed to say that such measures were taken according to orders of mine. I was precise in my directions, to see that the money was ultimately paid, but to use no unnecessary severity. Those were the very words. But I will call upon Colonel Adair! Where is he to be found?"

"Perhaps you had better not, my lord," replied Lacy—by no means feeling sure that the worthy colonel would extend a very courteous reception to one by whom he believed himself to have been treated ill; and anxious also to prevent any unnecessary collision which might obstruct his future views, either by producing anything like altercation between his father and Colonel Adair, or by showing the family and circumstances of her he loved to the fastidious eye of Lord Methwyn in a lower point of view than necessary. "Colonel Adair is only in lodgings at present, seeing what can be done to extricate himself from the difficulties into which the failure of his agent has thrown him. I am not very sure that he was well pleased to see me, and under all circumstances, perhaps your visit might annoy him, if made before he is in a situation to receive you better."

"Well, well, Charles, explain to him what my conduct has really been," replied the peer. "Tell him what I wrote to Williamson, and assure him that the unpleasant measures pursued were solely of that worthy's own contrivance. So now, Charles," continued the earl, with one of his own meaning smiles, "you have a good excuse for going back to-morrow morning to see the little beauty that used to set fire to all the young farmers' hearts in the parish church. Nay, Charles, do not colour—I blame you not—but only take my advice, my dear boy, do not carry the matter too far, for the old gentleman might call you out, you know."

"I trust you are only joking, my dear sir," replied Lacy, with his colour really heightened.

"Pshaw, my dear Charles," rejoined his father, "I do

not doubt you are a very moral young man; but a very moral young man is just the person to do what I have said—to fall in love with a pretty girl that he cannot marry; to go on with her from step to step till it is too late; to be called out by her father or brother; and then, provoked by insult, to fire, when he had no intention, killing his man, without the slightest wish to do so in the world. This is just the course of a very moral young man! At all events, my dear Charles, it behoves me, as your father, to give you a warning now and then."

CHAPTER V.

CHARLES LACY threw himself back in the carriage that was to bear him to the opera-house, to join his cousin Mary; and although he was of that blessed disposition which may be called a hopeful temperament, yet dark and somewhat gloomy were his meditations. Since he had last seen Helen Adair a cloud had come over the sun without a cause, and yet not unreasonably. The contradiction is but seeming. When he had left Helen Adair and her father, the same obstacles to his purposes had existed that now existed, and he had known their existence just as well; but in his conversation with his father he had his first regular encounter with any of those obstacles, and that had given him a more definite notion of the whole. Well, Lacy threw himself back in the carriage in a desponding mood, determined to succeed, inasmuch as he felt the happiness of life depended upon success; but yet contemplating with an anxious eye the probability of a thousand obstacles delaying him, and grieving him, and resisting him in his advance. The cushions of the carriage, however, were soft, and the stuffing full and elastic, and by some association he began to think of his fair cousin, Lady Mary.

Lady Mary Denham was the most comfortable cousin, friend, and confidante, that Charles Lacy could have upon the present occasion. To this conclusion did he come himself, and when at length the carriage stopped opposite the old shapeless brown brick building, which in those days was called the opera-house, he took his way direct to Lady Mary's box, which he found already tenanted by as many persons as an opera-box can hold with any regard to the purposes for which opera-boxes are ostensibly destined, namely, to see and hear what is going on upon the stage. There were three people in the box: the first in point of rank, beauty, and mind, was certainly Lady Mary herself; the second was that identical personage whom we have seen walking with Charles Lacy, when we first introduced him to the notice of our readers; and the third was a lady, who shall not only have due mention on account of her

sex, but also because she is the type or model of a particular class. By the world in general, she was known as or under the name of Viscountess Pontypool, but with Lady Mary Denham and all the numerous personages who loved or looked up to, or hung upon the skirts of, Lady Mary, she was better known by the name of my Aunt Pontypool; and indeed, as this sort of familiar appellation implied, she had lost her individuality in her attachment to her niece, and instead of showing herself as a planet moving in her own orbit, she had contented herself with turning round Lady Mary. She was herself the best-natured person in the world, and consequently, tried the temper of her poor niece every hour in the day, and proved how really sweet and kind it was; for, always anxious to do good to everybody, to aid everybody's schemes, and assist everybody's purposes, the Lady Pontypool was almost sure to do the very things that nobody wanted, and to keep Lady Mary in constant endeavour to put right again the things that she had put wrong. This, Lady Mary did without ever, except upon very extraordinary occasions, venturing one word of remonstrance to her Aunt Pontypool, for besides having a great respect for her motives, Lady Mary had a very great tenderness for her feelings, and would not have wounded them for the world—in the first place because she loved not to wound the feelings of any one—and in the second, because the peculiar circumstances of Lady Pontypool rendered her particularly susceptible to harsh words.

The late and last Lord Pontypool had married the lady of whom we speak, for the sake of her fortune, having expended his own upon horses and various kinds of cattle, which are famous for removing money from pocket to pocket. At the time he made his proposal, she was about thirty-three years of age, and having acquired a habit of seeing things in a different point of view from that under which they appeared to other people, the more her friends represented to her that his lordship was but a titled beggar with a good coat on, the more she determined to marry him, arguing, that if he had nothing to live on, and was in great distress, he had the more need of some one to give him means, and console him for his losses. Her ladyship's friends, however, took care to settle her whole fortune strictly upon herself, to which arrangement his lordship willingly agreed, knowing that at all events he would be placed in possession of a good income, and little doubting

that in case of necessity, he could persuade the kind-hearted girl to throw the deed into the fire. The case of necessity soon came, but he met with more opposition than he expected. No consideration for herself prevented Lady Pontypool from acquiescing at once in her husband's plan of giving up her settlement; but she had learned by this time that whatever he had, he would spend, and therefore for his sake, rather than her own, she not only refused, but maintained her resolution for four long years, through good treatment and bad, through threats and wheedling, till at length her worthy lord entered her room, pistol in hand, and telling her, that he had incurred a debt of honour which he could not pay, threatened to put an end to his own existence in her presence if the settlement was not given up. Knowing well that there were but few lengths to which passion would not carry him, and, therefore, that such a menace, however ungentlemanly, and like a bully, might still be fulfilled, Lady Pontypool yielded. The settlement was given up, and his lordship, in the flood-tide of his gratitude, promised reformation, economy, and abstinence. He so far kept his word, that he was three years in spending what he might by diligent application have consumed in three months. At the end of that time, having nothing left to spend, and Lady Pontypool nothing left to pillage, he applied to the ultimo ratio of a pistol, and therewith settled all accounts in this world, whatever might be the balance against him in the next.

Thus was Lady Pontypool left utterly destitute of aught but friends. Of these, however, she had several who deserved the name, but amongst the best of these was her own sister, the mother of Lady Mary Denham; who having married more wisely, remained more prosperous, though she had had the misfortune of seeing a husband whom she loved die early, and her daughter, then a child, left in the dangerous situation of an heiress. In her house Lady Pontypool found a home; a distant relation left her an annuity of a few hundreds a-year, which gave her back a feeling of independence, and devoting herself to love and admire her niece Lady Mary, she passed many a year in great comfort, growing old without knowing it, and dwindling gradually into my Aunt Pontypool. Lady Mary knew her value, and loved her dearly; as a child, laughed at and sometimes played upon the little weaknesses of a kind heart; but as she grew up to womanhood, and the first severe sorrow she had ever

known, assailed her in the death of her mother, just three days after she became of age, the companionship and kindness of her aunt proved her greatest comfort and consolation. The worthy lady's utter want of worldly knowledge was sometimes annoying; and many a little scrape had Lady Mary to disentangle, after her aunt had complicated it for all parties with the very best intentions. She was a very good chaperon, and enabled Lady Mary to give way to all that her own gaiety or kindness of heart prompted, without any danger to herself, at least.

As soon as the door was opened, my Aunt Pontypool turned round to see who would present themselves, and as soon as she saw Charles Lacy she blushed like a girl of sixteen; looked first at Lady Mary, then at Major Kennedy, and then at Charles Lacy again, and then got up a speech in her own mind explanatory of how Major Kennedy happened to be admitted to sit close by Lady Mary in her box during the whole of the opera. The peculiar conformation of her mind and character having been explained, it will be evident to any one that good Lady Pontypool had laid it down in her own mind as an inevitable necessity, that Lady Mary Denham was to marry Charles Lacy; and in this arrangement of their destiny, her ladyship had been fully confirmed by hearing Lord Methwyn declare one day, that he could desire nothing better for his son. From this, as a starting post, she ran on to conceive that Lacy would naturally be hurt and offended, and jealous, when he saw a very handsome man, like Major Kennedy admitted to sit next Lady Mary all night at the opera, when no other gentleman had been invited to share the honour; and she instantly determined to smooth everything down by one of those well-intentioned explanatory speeches which have occasionally set both families and kingdoms by the ears. Luckily, however, she was stopped in full career, by seeing Lacy shake Kennedy by the hand with as kind a look as the husbandman gives the harvest-moon; and then speak to both herself and Lady Mary without the slightest signs of umbrage, jealousy, or uneasiness. For a moment she fidgeted on her chair, not knowing whether to speak her speech or not; but as Lacy turned towards his cousin, and began to talk with her in a low tone, she thought she might as well let it alone; and bending on her part towards Major Kennedy, she accounted to him, in an under-voice, for the confidential way in which the two cousins

were speaking, by informing him, that it was very well understood by their mutual friends that they were soon to be united. Kennedy's brow grew dark, and his cheek turned red; but he only said, "Ha!" and looked towards the stage, on which the dancers were putting themselves in the usual attitudes. After he had thus gazed, however, for a minute or two, Kennedy—not particularly delighted with the peculiar class of distortions which he saw, and remembering that his conduct might seem a little rude to Lady Pontypool—turned towards her again, and was humming over the commencement of an uneasy conversation, when Lady Mary's reply to what Lacy had been saying caught his ear, and deprived his tongue of its own powers.

"A private audience, Charles," she said; "indeed, my dear cousin, this looks very serious! You do not mean to make me a formal proposal, surely? Never do such stupid things as that, Charles. Formal proposals have been exploded these ten years; and as for a gallant, whispered, equivocal declaration, that commits no party to anything, and leaves them free to change their minds before the moon changes—there is no place like an opera-box."

"No, no," replied Lacy, nearly aloud, "that will not do, Mary. What I have to say must be for your private ear, when you have time to give me serious attention."

"Still no place better than the here and the now," answered the gay girl, laughing. "My Aunt Pontypool will hear nothing that I beg her not; and Major Kennedy will turn away his head, I am sure. Will you not, Major Kennedy, turn away your head while my cousin here makes me his declaration?"

"Most certainly," replied Kennedy, with an effort at gaiety almost as unsuccessful as one of the second-rate dancer's efforts at grace. "Most certainly, Lady Mary; or leave the box, if you command."

Lady Mary gazed at him gravely for a moment, and then the bright blood rushed up into her face, while turning away her head she put her handkerchief to her face for a single moment, not letting any one see that it was to a smelling bottle of strong salts, wrapped in the folds of the handkerchief, that she applied under the temporary emotion that affected her. Kennedy saw that she was hurt, and anticipated the very words she might have used as a reply to his ill-judged answer, depriving him for ever

of the enviable situation which he had that night enjoyed, and throwing down the hopes he had built up thereon. But the colour passed away from Mary Denham's cheek ; the woman's heart triumphed, and she replied, " I am satisfied of your obedience, sir, but shall not put it so far to the proof. My cousin, who is never ill humoured with any of my little caprices, will, I know, wait till to-morrow to make his declaration. To cheer him to-night, however," she added, resuming her gayer tone, " I will promise him, upon my honour, to accept him when he does make his declaration. So now, Major Kennedy, you may safely tell all the world who have any hearts to lose, not to throw them away upon me, for that Lady Mary Denham's heart is engaged."

Kennedy gazed at her earnestly for a moment, while his heart seemed to sink and rise alternately like a balance into which nearly equal weights had been suddenly thrown ; but there was a kindly, though a laughing light in Lady Mary's beautiful eyes, which showed him that some gay equivocal lay in her speech, and, after a moment, the scale that bore his hopes rose gaily up again.

" Charles, I wish you would see for my carriage !" added Lady Mary, a moment after, " I hate to see these creatures grinning and gnashing their teeth. I will look at their convulsions no longer." The carriage was soon found, and Charles Lacy, returning to the box, gave his arm, not to his cousin, but to Lady Pontypool. Kennedy turned to Lady Mary, and, looking down, but not looking cross, she placed her arm in his, and left the opera.

CHAPTER VI.

CHARLES LACY had sent away his carriage, and as soon as his cousin and her aunt were safe in their vehicle, he turned with his companion to walk home. "So, Lacy," said Major Kennedy, ere they had taken two steps, "Lady Pontypool tells me you are already engaged to Lady Mary."

"Lady Pontypool is mistaken," answered Lacy, drily. "Take my word for it, Kennedy, Mary and I know more about the matter than any one, so do not let my Aunt Pontypool lead you into any more scrapes, or you may throw away cards which, well played, would win you an important game."

"Well, I believe you are right," answered his friend, assuming a lighter tone, "but you will acknowledge, Lacy, that you acted and spoke very much like two engaged people."

"No, indeed," answered Lacy, "I will make no such admission. We acted very much like two people who knew they never could or would be engaged to each other; and remember, Kennedy, for I tell you beforehand, as we always have acted so towards each other, we always shall act so. As far as I am concerned, you must forget all jealousy; and now, as your way home lies thither, fare you well."

"Good-night," replied Kennedy, and turning up Pall Mall, he pursued his way meditating whether it could really be true that he whose sum of fortunes did not amount to a thousand a year, and his commission, stood fair to win the hand of one so lovely, when that hand was shackled with the golden fetters of high birth and princely wealth. His meditation continued till he reached his own door, and then it ended with this very extraordinary aspiration, "I wish to God she had not a farthing! I would ask her to-morrow!"

In the meanwhile Lacy walked on, and was about to pass through the string of carriages which lined Charles Street and the Haymarket, when he was assailed by the wonted cry of—"A link, your honour?" "No!" an-

swered Lacy. "Oh, a link, my lord?" rejoined the boy. Lacy reiterated his "No!" "Oh, do, your excellency!" shouted the lad. "Can I get your grace's carriage? It is but to earn a trifle, my prince," he continued, running on before Lacy's footsteps—"Do give me a trifle, your royal highness—pray do, my king of a gentleman! My emperor, pray do!" and then, seeing that all the titles he showered upon the stranger had no effect, he dropped the lighted end of his link with a despairing sort of fall, adding, in a sad tone, "Ah, if your honour knew what it was to have a sick mother and nothing to give her, I think you would."

Had the boy been really able to bestow all the dignities of which he had been so lavish in words, he would have found no means of calling Lacy's attention half so forcibly as that which he employed at last. There was something in his tone and his manner that was true. It was not the common whine of the beggar, nor the cant of the hypocrite, but it was the last appeal of real distress, when all other and usual means had failed. Lacy stopped, and looked at the boy, who with his ragged hat in one hand, and his drooping link in the other, had paused at the crossing, and was gazing up in his face, with an expression of some slight wonder at the sudden stop which that gentleman had made, but with tears in his eyes at the same time, as if the words he had used to touch the heart of another, had reawakened overpowering feelings in his own.

"And is your mother really sick, my poor boy?" demanded Lacy, gazing at him attentively. "I am not a man to be cheated, for I investigate all these things myself: so tell me the truth at once, and it may be better for you."

"It is true as I am alive, your honour!" replied the boy; and seeing that Lacy still gazed at him with a look of that doubt which the continual deceptions of a deceitful race calls up on the features of a man of the world, when any common-place tale of distress is poured into his ear, he added, "If your honour likes, you can go with me this very minute, and see with your own eyes. If you do not find my poor mother sick in bed, and not a bit in the house to give her, break my head for me."

"Well," replied Lacy, "show me the way, my man, for I will go; and if I find your mother really in the state you mention, I may do something more for you than give you a sixpence."

It is probable that there were at that moment in the vast accumulation of little brick buildings called London, at least the number of six young men who would have acted just as Lacy did; but were we to calculate all the chances for and against any one of these six being at the opera that night, and meeting with that link boy, we should find them to be infinite. The boy therefore stared at his determination, wondering, as every one has a right to do, at an event which never occurred to him before; but not at all shaken in his purpose. True it is he had offered to conduct Lacy to the dwelling of his mother, without the slightest expectation of his agreeing to the proposal, and solely with a view to catch the impending sixpence; but still when that gentleman took him at his word, he was not at all dismayed, from the simple fact that his mother was sick in bed, without food, and with very little raiment. There was a momentary hesitation, however, in his manner, arising from surprise, which again made Lacy doubt, and adding, "Come, my boy, show me the way," he followed him across the Haymarket, and down the Strand.

In those days, some of the most disreputable streets in London ran along between the Strand and King Street, Covent Garden, in a line parallel to both; and between these disreputable streets and the Strand itself, passed a number of courts and alleys, as dangerous and dishonest, as the others were debauched and licentious. The nests of pickpockets and low swindlers, and often the resort of the highwayman, the footpad, and the housebreaker, these alleys contained within themselves a life of mystery and darkness, into which the eye of day never penetrated.

To the mouth of one of these courts the boy conducted Lacy, after having extinguished his link against a lamp-post, a proceeding which the young officer did not object to, having but little desire to be conducted to the dwelling of poverty with a torch before him. When the boy stopped, however, before the mouth of the court, with the gin-shop and the pawnbroker on either side, Lacy looked up *the dark and yawning gulf*, and could have wished for a light. The gin-shop, it is true, was not closed; yet dim and smoky was the glare which proceeded from the yawning door and drunken-looking windows of the lowly house of evil spirits; for as yet they had not taken up their abode in palaces—as yet, no magnificent lamps of gas flamed before the mahogany doors of those temples of *Seevah*.

Dim and smoky was the glare which proceeded from the poor gin-shop of those days, and throwing its misty light only across the mouth of the court, it served merely to render the interior more dark and gloomy to the eyes of Lacy. He was not a man, however, to pause for dangers when he had determined upon any course of action, even if he knew all the perils beforehand. On this occasion, indeed, his long absence had rendered him but little conversant with all the wiles and the villany of the great capital; though as a man of the world, he knew that a dark alley at eleven o'clock at night was not a desirable promenade for a man of fashion with a gold watch and seals at his side. The boy, too, had made a sort of irresolute halt ere he entered the court, as if not well knowing whether to conduct his companion into its dark and dangerous recesses or not; but Lacy's calm "Go on, my good boy!" decided the matter, and they were soon plunged in the abyss. For the first hundred yards all was quiet; but at the end of that space, Lacy received an intimation of the sort of society upon whose privacy he was intruding, by hearing as he passed a window,—the dirt on which rendered all blinds needless—a cracked and reedy female voice addressing some tender speeches to a male companion, the regular construction of which was so interrupted by expletives, neither very decent nor very reverent, that none but the initiated could have discovered what was meant. Still he went on, however, and as it luckily so happened, that the greater part of the fair and brave who tenanted that portion of the earth were out upon what they themselves termed the lay, he was suffered to proceed uninterrupted, till the boy, having taken a turn to the right, stopped at the door of a dark-looking house in a paved court.

"Come in, your honour! come in!" cried the youth. "Lord 'a mercy! I was afraid we should have met some one, and then you might not have got on so safe!"

Although this speech fully opened Lacy's eyes to the dangers of the pass which he had had the hardihood to force, yet, being one of those men who remark and examine every particular with a rapidity of perception and combination only to be acquired by frequenting scenes of danger and difficulty, he at once deduced, both from the boy's words and manner, that no evil was intended towards him by his young conductor. The boy had pushed open the swing door of the house, and Lacy entering without

hesitation, it instantly closed behind him, leaving the whole passage in darkness.

"This way, sir," said the lad; and following his voice, the young officer walked on till his foot hit against the lowest step of the stairs, the boy warning him at the same time to take care how he went, as some of the planks were rickety.

A door upon the first floor was open, and Lacy could see an old woman sitting over a fire, muttering some indistinct words, apparently to herself. She seemed to be deaf, however, for the footsteps on the stairs did not attract her attention, and Lacy and his young guide passed on. At the second floor they halted, and the boy opened a door, from which immediately streamed forth a light. That light, however, was not at all sufficiently brilliant to dazzle Lacy's eyes, although they had been so long accustomed to darkness; and by the faint rays of a rushlight, which stood in a green glass bottle for a candlestick, he could see a decent room enough, with a door half open on his left-hand, leading into a back room; a bed on the floor in one corner, a table, two whole chairs and a broken one, and a small fire-place, with a cupboard on either side. But one person was in the room, and that was a girl about seventeen, exceedingly beautiful, and though coarsely dressed, bearing about her no touch or trait of that class of women by whom there could be no doubt she was surrounded in that place. She was sitting by the rushlight, working eagerly to accomplish the mystery of making a man's shirt; but the moment Lacy entered she dropped her work, and looked first at his conductor, then at himself, while her pale cheek turned still paler, and her large dark eyes expanded with a look of apprehension, if not despair. Not knowing what she feared, Lacy advanced and said a few kindly words, while the boy gabbled something quickly in explanation; but ere she could answer, or well comprehend either, a voice, feeble but distinct, was heard calling from the next room.

It wanted fewer combinations than are required for the relief of a besieged city to enable Lacy's mind to gather the chief facts regarding the family by whom he was surrounded, and he accordingly did gather them in a moment. So without more ado, he walked on into the other room, taking the rushlight with him. Before him, opposite to the door, was a bed, without curtains, whereon lay the form of what had once been a very handsome woman, but

now pale, worn, haggard, and to all appearance dying ; it was only in the large dark eyes, and fine line of features, that anything like beauty was to be discerned. Advancing direct to her bedside, Lacy applied himself at once to speak comfort.

"Do not be alarmed, my good lady," he said ; "I came here with no evil intention, I can assure you. Your son here told me of your situation. To say the truth, I did not quite believe him ; but as he offered to show me where you lived, I followed him, in order to judge with my own eyes, and if I found his story true, to do what little I can to help you."

"Oh, thank you, thank you, sir," replied the sick woman ; "but Bill should not have brought you here. It is a bad place, sir ; and how will you get out ? I am very much obliged to you, sir ; but I wish you had not come."

Lacy smiled, for the very wish the poor woman expressed that he had not come, made him glad that he had ; for it showed him that virtue, and honour, and good feeling can even dwell unsullied in such abodes as that wherein he stood ; and to do service to one who thought of his safety before the relief he could afford her, was, in his mind, well worth any danger that our clay can suffer. He spoke to her then in the manner which such feelings prompted, and being by no means convinced that he could carry any portion of the contents of his purse to the end of the alley, he took care that one-half thereof at least should remain where it could really benefit. Although the sum was not very large, the sight of the two or three gold pieces which Lacy laid down beside her, brought first a bright light and then some brighter drops into the poor woman's eyes. For an instant, the many emotions to which such relief gave rise, struggled against each other for precedence ; but in a moment after they fell into their right order. She clasped her hands together, and with her eyes raised up, murmured a few words of thanks and prayer. Then the mother made itself heard, and turning to her son, she cried, "Oh, Bill, run out and see if you can get something for your sister and yourself to eat before the shops are shut ;" and then turning to Lacy, she poured forth the torrent of her gratitude in words that called the tears into his eyes.

Lacy looked away, and beckoning to the boy, who, having snatched up a guinea, was running towards the

door with all the eagerness of hunger, he bade him go to the first surgeon he could find, and bid him come to see his mother directly. "Tell him," added Lacy, fearing that selfish considerations might make the medical man neglect the call if unseconded by some more potent motive than the mere voice of a ragged beggar boy, "tell him that the Honourable Captain Lacy is here, and will wait till he comes. There, give him that card."

The boy flew to obey; and the poor woman, renewing her thanks, was beginning, in even a feebler tone than before, to explain how and why she was found in such a situation, but Lacy interrupted her, bidding her remain quiet till the surgeon came.

"I shall wait for him in the next room," said Lacy; "and in the meantime your daughter here shall tell me all about you."

Notwithstanding all he had done, the anxious feelings of the mother would rise up with a momentary doubt, and she cast one apprehensive glance upon her child as the girl followed the young officer from the room. Lacy's eye caught the expression of her countenance, and he understood it, but was not at all offended. Leaving the door wide open therefore, he sat down before the fire, where the mother's eye could rest upon him, saying, "Now, my good girl, you can go on with your work, and at the same time tell me who you are, and all the rest."

With a timid and somewhat embarrassed, but not an ungraceful manner, the girl proceeded to tell the little tale connected with her mother's situation, but as her inexperience in story-telling rendered it rather long and desultory, it may as well be abridged here. Her mother had two brothers, she said, of the name of Green, one of whom was in the army in Spain, but of him they had not heard for a long time—four or five years. The other lived in London, and it was in his house they now were. The father of the three had been a reputable farmer in the country, somewhat famous for his skill in and love of country sports; and in this respect he had been followed by worthy representatives in his two sons, who in boxing, wrestling, cricket, and quoits were unrivalled. At an early age the daughter had married a respectable corn dealer in London; but shortly after her marriage the affairs of her father began to go wrong. Her husband did his best to afford relief, but in vain. Loss succeeded loss, and at length the old man was obliged to quit his

farm, and died within a few weeks of a broken heart in a neighbouring cottage. There seemed no choice for the sons but to become labourers in the county where they had held a better station, or to seek their fortunes elsewhere; and their resolution was not long in being taken. The youngest betook himself to London, and the eldest, after struggling on in different capacities for some time, enlisted in a cavalry regiment, went to India and then to Spain, and when last his family heard of him, was serving with some distinction.

"Green!" said Lacy, as the girl came to this part of her tale, "Green! I remember something of the name—oh, yes! there was a Sergeant Green of the — dragoons, who distinguished himself particularly at Fuentes d'Onoro, and was publicly noticed by Lord Wellington. He got a step, I remember very well. But tell me——" Just as he was speaking, however, an extraordinary scraping and growling in one of the cupboards by the fire-side caught his attention, and he inquired what the noise proceeded from.

"Oh, it is nothing but my uncle's bulldogs, sir," replied the girl. "Poor beasts! we have had no meat to give them to eat all day—though they were fed yesterday with what my poor mother ought to have had herself. And the game cocks have had nothing either;" and as she spoke she opened one of the cupboards from which the sound proceeded. Behind the door were the bars of a sort of cage, against which were pressed the eager noses of two fine dogs, the miserable thinness and glaring eyes of which spoke plainly that they had shared in the poverty of the house.

"But if your uncle has neither food for himself or his family, why does he not sell these poor beasts, who are starving likewise?" was Lacy's immediate question.

"Oh! my uncle is not able to stir, sir," replied the girl. "He lost his last battle at Moulsey, and is lying at the hospital so badly beaten that he does not know any one, and the surgeons say he will die."

A light broke in upon Lacy as she spoke. "Oh, then your uncle is a prize-fighter?" he exclaimed; "is that the case, my good girl?"

"Yes, sir," answered the girl, "and he has been away these ten days; but my mother dared not sell the dogs or the cocks either, for though he has been kind to us ever since my poor father failed, and died in consequence of the

money he lent my grandfather, yet my uncle William is so particular about his dogs, that he often said he would not take five hundred pounds for them. So that all we have had to live upon for the last week is what my brother has been able to get with his link which a few gentlemen gave him: for though I have done three shirts and carried them home, Mrs. Hodgkins will not pay for them till I have done the whole."

"That is very cruel of her, I think!" replied Lacy.

"Oh, but I dare not tell her so!" answered the girl, "for fear she should not give me any more work; and besides you know, sir, this is a bad place, and she thinks that she might lose the linen if she gave more without having some money of ours in her hands. I am sure I ought to think it very kind of her to trust me with the first she gave me, without making me give a deposit."

Lacy was not a man to weaken the foundation of one good feeling, though perhaps that foundation was not a good one; and though he thought that the degree of liberality which the worthy Mrs. Hodgkins had shown did not call for any very great gratitude, he refrained from expressing such an opinion, but sat for a moment with his eyes fixed on the fire, musing upon the many miseries that swarm around us in a great capital while we are rolling in wealth and luxury. While he thus paused and meditated the door of the house was heard to shut-to with a bang, and then came the sound of steps ascending the staircase. "The surgeon!" thought Lacy at first, but then there was a sort of clang and clatter, not exactly like that of a man walking in fetters, but certainly as if there were a good deal more iron scattered about the person of the new comer than usually decorates that of a man of peace. The girl looked anxiously towards the door, and Lacy could see the sick woman in the next room raise herself in bed to listen. In the meanwhile the steps mounted slowly to the floor below, and then a deep, powerful voice was heard, demanding in a courteous tone, "Pray, ma'am, can you tell me whereabouts in this dark house are the lodgings of Mr. William Green, and his sister, Mistress Milsome?"

"And what the devil do you want with them, you flash covee, with your long sword, saddle, bridle, whack row di dow?" rejoined a cracked female voice, which Lacy justly concluded to proceed from the larynx of the old woman he had seen snoring over the fire below.

"What I want with them I will tell them when I find them," replied the other, "so be so good as to let me know if they are here, or on the floor above?"

"Ay! now I'll bet you a quartern," said the old woman's voice, "that you've come arter the pretty girl—but I can tell you she's engaged! There's a gemman with her upstairs. He crept up with Bill half an hour ago, and then they sent Bill away. They thought I didn't see, but I sees with one eye shut and t'other eye open anyhow. Come, come," she added, in a louder tone, "don't you go up—didn't I tell you she's got company."

"Hold off your hands, you old baggage!" replied the other voice. "If you're a gentleman as I take you to be—which you are not by the way, being a woman and a blackguard—behave as sich, and act according-ly!" and having concluded this curious adjuration, laying a great stress upon the last syllable, the speaker was heard making his way up the stairs as fast as the darkness would let him. Directly opposite to him was the door by which Lacy had entered, and to it therefore the visitor's hand was immediately applied, feeling for the handle of the lock. As soon as he had found it, the door was uncereemoniously thrown open, and a figure entered on which we must pause.

It was that of a man about six feet three inches in height, with a countenance which was rather handsome than otherwise, bearing a grave and determined, but somewhat self-important expression; and a frame which added to the case of great muscular strength the erect and well-balanced air of long military training. His apparel was that of an adjutant of some dragoon regiment, in the half dress of that period; a close-fitting blue coat, with brass plates upon the shoulders, a red sash round his waist, and his long sword by his side. His hands were also well covered with thick buckskin gloves, as white as pipe-clay could make them, and at the wrist of his dexter hung a small cane by a thin leathern thong. His eye was very bright, and his cheek, which had a deep gash all the way from the ear to the corner of the mouth, seemed to have been rendered redder than natural, probably by his skirmish with the old woman below. At the same time he was evidently heated in temper, and as he entered he gave a glance at the girl, another at Lacy, who calmly kept his seat before the fire, and then advancing gave a flourish with his hand worthy of Corporal Trim. "I beg leave,

sir, to inquire," he said, addressing Lacy, "I beg leave, sir, to inquire, what you are doing here with my niece? If you are a gentleman, as I take you to be, behave as sich and act according-ly! I beg to know what you are doing here with my niece, that is all!"

"Nothing!" was Lacy's calm reply, gazing at him from head to foot as a specimen of a class of viviparous bipeds with which he was well acquainted.

"Nothing, sir?—nothing?" rejoined the soldier, looking at him stedfastly; and then somewhat puzzled by Lacy's coolness, he took refuge once more in his favourite speech, "If you are a gentleman, as I take you to be, behave as sich, and act according-ly."

"So, my dear sir, I always endeavour to do," replied Lacy, "and so am I now doing.. But you had better attend to your niece, who is pulling your arm, or listen to your sister, who is speaking to you from the next room, and you will probably find cause not to stare at me so furiously any longer."

Louisa Milsome, as Lacy had said, was by this time holding her uncle by the arm, deluging the sleeve of his coat with tears, half joyful at the return of a relation whose fate had been for many years uncertain, and from whom she now hoped protection and support, and half frightened at the angry tone in which he was addressing the only person who for many a long month had shown anything like generous and disinterested kindness to herself and her sick mother. At the same time the poor woman was raising her feeble voice, in order to stay her brother's ill-directed wrath from falling upon Lacy; but in his first misapprehension the soldier neither attended to the one, nor heard the other till the young officer's reply directed his notice to both. Then throwing his arm round the slight figure of his niece, and, pressing her to him with the tenderness of a parent, he said, as he gazed sometimes upon her, sometimes upon her mother, and addressing his speech partly to both, "I am sure, Louisa—I do not think you would turn out a bad girl with such a father and such a mother as you had; and I am sure, Mary, very sure, you would not let her—but what does such a gentleman as that do here? By my soul and life, if I do not believe it is Captain Lacy, with whom I had the honour to serve at Fuentes d'Onoro, and at Vittoria, and the Pyrenees, and at Orthez, and before Toulouse. 'Pon my soul, sir, I do not think you would wrong a poor girl either—

but then, why should you come here? If you be a gentleman, as I take you to be, behave as sich, and act accordingly-ly."

"And so he does, Charles, and so he does," cried his sister from the other room; "he has been our benefactor this very night. He has given us bread when we are all starving, and has sent for a surgeon to attend me, for which God bless him! though I doubt that it will be any good."

"Sir, I beg your pardon!" cried the soldier, dropping his right hand, which had remained partly raised while he continued in any doubt, and looking Lacy full in the face, "sir, I beg your pardon; I hope I have not offended, sir, but I cannot stand disgrace. I am now an officer in his majesty's service—rose from the ranks—but still, sir, come of honest people, and I cannot stand disgrace. So I hope I have not offended; but I was under a mistake."

"You have not offended me in the least, Mr. Green," replied Lacy. "I heard what passed below, so that I know your mistake was natural; but depend upon it I should feel as much, ashamed of bringing disgrace upon your family as you would in suffering it. But now go and speak to your sister. I shall wait till I hear the surgeon's opinion, and then leave you alone together, for doubtless you have much to tell, and much to hear also."

"Nothing to tell, sir, that I care to tell before all the world," answered the soldier; "but as you are so good as to excuse me, I will go and speak to poor Mary for a minute or two." This he accordingly did, and apparently heard from her more particularly the kindness which Lacy had shown towards herself and family, for in a moment he returned, and in his own person thanked the young officer for his benevolence towards his sister in her distress. "I always knew you were a gentleman, sir," he added, varying a little his favourite phrase, "I always knew you were a gentleman, and would act accordingly: but you see, sir, though I have been back in England some weeks now, it was only yesterday I could hear anything of my family, and then surely I heard plenty of bad news, that my brother was lying like to die at the hospital, and that my sister and her children were bad off enough. So I went to see my brother to-day, hoping he could tell me where to find Mary; but you, sir, who have been accustomed to see men cut down with the sabre, or riddled with shot holes, or pounded with cannon balls, or doubled up with

the bayonet, you can form no notion of how a man may be beaten with two fists. There he was lying, sir, quite insensible, poor fellow! and could not answer me a word, though I spoke loud enough to make the deaf hear. However, I sat with him all day, till about an hour or two ago he began to change, and his very first talk, when he recovered his senses, was about Mary here. So as the surgeon told me he was better, and that of all things quiet was good for him, I came away here."

Although Charles Lacy, so long as the object of assisting a fellow creature was before him, forgot all the little et ceteras of personal convenience; yet when that object was removed, no man had less of a predilection for second stories in a back alley. He had none of that rhodomontade of benevolence about him, which leads exceedingly well-disposed persons to stay by the bedside of the poor and sick so long, that the poor and sick wish them anywhere else on the earth, or under the earth; and the moment he had done as much as his good sense told him was all he could do to serve a needy and deserving object, that moment he was ready and willing to return to the habits and occupations of his rank in life. Having listened thus to the explanatory speech of Green, he merely waited further till the surgeon, having arrived, had considered the poor woman's case; and then leaving his card with the worthy soldier with an invitation to call upon him next day, he took advantage of the surgeon's departure, to leave the alley in company with one who knew its intricacies better than himself, and once more bent his steps to Portman Square.

CHAPTER VII.

CHARLES LACY was up betimes, and towards six o'clock he had posted himself at his window, and watched the early sights of a London morning, meditating in a rambling and desultory way on such matters as those written above; but the striking of the clock called him from his reverie, and dressing himself as speedily as the circumstances—and the want of hot water in a London house at six in the morning—would admit, he issued forth into the outward air, which even in London smacked of all the fresh invigorating coolness of the morning-tide. The maid, whose peculiar function it was to heat the water, for which he had rung seven times, cursed him by all her gods, and wished him at the devil; and his own particular valet thought unto himself, "There's something in the wind to take him out so early," but like a discreet valet he uttered not a word. Away then Lacy went till he came to a street called Argyle Street, where he sought out a house upon the left-hand side, and thereunto applied the knocker. The door was opened by a neatly-dressed maid, who straightway ushered him into a small back parlour, where, at a table covered with a scanty but a clean tablecloth, sat the representative of a class which no longer exists. He was a little man with a pig-tail, which would be quite sufficient to distinguish him from all other animals; but we must and can give some other characteristic differences which may be requisite to a right comprehension of his state of being. His stomach was in size and shape very much like the back of an old-fashioned lute, not very protuberant, and yet large enough to throw him somewhat on his heels when he did walk. Over this rotundity, he wore a white waistcoat, which begun at his throat, ended not till his legs (separate and distinct as legs) appeared from beneath the ample pockets. The other side of his person was covered with a snuff-brown coat, cut in the fashion of a Quaker's; and over the standing collar hung the afore-said pig-tail, which, as if to justify its descent from the animal unto whom it is indebted for its designation, pertinaciously turned to one side, notwithstanding the continual

twitches of its owner, who endeavoured from time to time to drag it to the 'juste milieu.' Striped silk stockings proceeding from drab breeches, and high shoes with buckles, made up the rest; and thus equipped, Mr. Owen Snipes, whose name long figured on the law list as a most respectable attorney, sat before Captain Lacy, eating his breakfast at the precise hour of seven, from which he had never varied once in fifty years. As Lacy entered, and even while he was bidding him welcome, the old gentleman eyed the small coffee pot, and the single muffin, which formed his invariable commencement of the day's work; and then beckoning to Rebecca his maid, he enjoined her straightway to double the supply. On this, however, Lacy put a negative, and taking the two fingers of the right hand which the old gentleman extended to him, he sat down beside him, and as soon as the door was closed, proceeded to explain what brought him there at that early and unseasonable hour.

"But, my dear sir," rejoined Mr. Snipes to Lacy's last sentences, "you know very well that I do not like to lend money at all, as I term it; and if you like to lend it to this gentleman, why do you not do it yourself? I have three thousand pounds of yours in my hands at this very moment, as I term it."

"But I have already explained to you," replied Lacy, "that being somewhat angry in regard to my father's proceedings, he would by no means accept of the money from myself. If you will then be kind enough to advance the money, I will be security for the payment; but even that fact of my being security I must have concealed, or I am afraid we should hurt his feelings."

"Very extraordinary feelings indeed, as I term it!" replied the man of law, "very extraordinary feelings indeed; but I suppose I must advance the money, as you are inclined to be the security; but remember, my dear sir, you are acting without my advice as a lawyer in this business, indeed against it, for, as I term it, if you were to ask my advice——"

"But I do not ask it, my good friend," replied Lacy: "for the sole sake of keeping your conscience clear in case I should be a loser, I ask no counsel or opinion on the subject. So get the bond or whatever security you desire drawn up, and I will sign, seal, and deliver as soon as you like."

"Patience, patience, my dear sir," replied Mr. Owen

Snipes, "the instrument, as we term it, cannot be drawn up so soon. When do you wish me to stand and deliver? as our worthy gentleman of the road term it. Will not to-morrow do?"

Lacy, however, explained to him that he had already promised the money by twelve o'clock; and having arranged with Mr. Snipes the exact sort of common acknowledgment that was to be taken of Colonel Adair, whereunto he, Lacy, was afterwards to add his own personal security, he agreed to meet the worthy lawyer at the old soldier's lodgings at noon; and so, bidding him farewell, departed.

Poor Lacy found that in his eagerness to serve Colonel Adair he had inflicted a heavy burden upon himself; for when he returned home there was still many a long and weary hour between him and the time he had appointed for his visit. Impatient for the coming of mid-day, he sauntered out and strolled down St. James's Street, as the most approved method known of getting rid of time which we do not know what else to do with. He there encountered a personage who instantly gave a new direction to his thoughts, by confirming the tidings which he had heard the night before in regard to France. That personage was no other than the then commander-in-chief, who, with that fine simplicity of character which distinguished him, was walking calmly amongst his father's subjects with none of the assumptions of high rank. To Charles Lacy he was personally known; and, bidding him share his walk, he went on for some way conversing on the state of public affairs, and the probable result of the late events on the Continent.

Lacy forgot not Colonel Adair, and as the opportunity now presented itself, he failed not to use it. The conversation was long, and though of some interest in regard to this tale, must be omitted to make room for other matter. One sentence only it may be necessary to record. "Well, Captain Lacy," said the duke, as they concluded, and he was about to turn away, "if you are contented to be Captain Lacy still, and wait for the step you had a right to expect, I dare say that the other matter can be accomplished. I must look how the list stands—will bear it in mind—and if, in the course of events, an opportunity occurs, will by no means fail."

Lacy expressed his thanks, and took his leave, and rejoicing in all his successful arrangements of that morning, .

determined in his own mind that it must be twelve o'clock. Without looking at his watch then, for fear it should give the lie to his pre-determination in regard to the hour, he hurried on, entered Swallow Street, and in less than five minutes was at the door he sought. The maid-servant, somewhat more tidy than usual, was standing with her head half out, speaking to some person of no consequence, and to Lacy's inquiry for Colonel Adair, she replied that he was out. The moment after, however, she recognised the inquirer, and swept away the clouds from Lacy's face more cleanly than ever brush from her hand swept dust off furniture, by exclaiming, "Oh, sir! you're the gentleman who saw the colonel last night, arn't you?—You're Captain Lacy? oh! he said if you called, to tell you he'd be home directly, if you'd walk up."

Lacy assented, and with a sort of thrilling presentiment at his heart that he might find Helen Adair alone he gave the girl no time to announce him. Helen was in the drawing-room, and alone; and in her hands a card, on which a name was printed. She instantly let it fall upon the table, and as Lacy advanced to shake hands with her, his eyes lighted upon the card, and he saw that it was one of his own. It strengthened his hope that he was loved, and yet the reader learned in psychology must not thence deduce that he was vain. The truth is, there was one particular fact connected with that card, which gave to the sight of it in Helen's hands, a particular import. Lacy, be it remembered, had never in his life left his card upon Colonel Adair, or sent it up to crave admission, or anything of the kind. He had once and only once left a card at Dr. Bellingham's, while Helen was there, and that was upon one occasion, when he left for her herself some rare hot-house flowers which she had never seen, and wished to see; and the card had been left for Dr. Bellingham.

Helen Adair laid down the card on the table, and she blushed as she did so; and there was a timidity and a softness in her whole manner which Lacy saw and felt to his very heart. The maid saw it too, and convinced that she had done the wisest thing in the world in showing the young gentleman up to the young lady, she shut the door like a compassionate girl as she was, and left them together. Helen Adair had given Lacy her hand as the mere common form of salutation on meeting a kind friend; but Lacy, on his part, kept it a single instant longer in his

than was altogether necessary, and as he did so, he looked into her beautiful eyes—so soft, so liquid, so full of light—till the long fringes dropped over them, and her cheek turned a little pale, and then burned again with a warmer glow than ever.

What a torrent of emotions rushed through Lacy's breast at that moment, and how the waves of irresolution tossed him to and fro! "She must see what I feel," he thought, "and yet if she do see, she may think I trifle with her, unless I give voice to those feelings; then, if I speak she must tell her father. I cannot ask her not, and then—yet better that I should encounter the whole storm at once than let her doubt me for a moment." What is resolution, and prudence, and calculation, and wisdom, when a man's inclination takes the other side against him? Lacy looked at the clock on the mantle-piece, and it only stood at half-past eleven; "I shall have plenty of time," he thought. As he did so, he relinquished Miss Adair's hand, and she sank quietly back upon the sofa, with her eyes bent on the ground, and Lacy took the seat beside her. "I have come a little before my time," he said, "but I was up early, and somewhat anxious——"

Lacy paused with a slight return of irresolution, for Helen sat so still and so silent that he would have given a good deal for a single word to help him on. She had given up her work, she moved not, she spoke not, she scarcely seemed to breathe, and her cheek had grown very pale.

"I thought it was later," continued Lacy, "and perhaps my mistake regarding the hour, makes me an intruder upon you, Miss Adair—shall I leave you and return?"

It was the most awkward speech man ever made; but Helen's reply saved all. She had never been taught to conceal, and she answered at once, "Oh, no! my father will be home directly—he said at twelve," and she too looked at the clock, and as she did so, and saw that it was but half-past eleven, the warm blood again mounted bright into her cheek. She turned her eyes next to Lacy for but one single moment, with a look of doubt, and hesitation, and anxiety, as if she would have asked, "What should I say?" and then she dropped them again, and said nothing more.

It was irresistible. "Helen!" said Lacy, "dear Helen!" Then came a thundering knock at the street door, and Helen started up with a burning cheek and a bright

drop or two glistening on her eyelashes. "Stay one moment," cried Lacy, catching her hand.

"Oh, no, not now, Captain Lacy," she replied; and then, seeing that the light in his eyes grew dim as she said "Captain Lacy,"—a name that he had never been called in Dr. Bellingham's family—she added, "not now, Charles!" a name which she had heard him called a hundred times—and hurried to the door, where, pausing for one moment, she turned her eyes again upon him, half in tears, half in smiles, as if to say, "I would fain stay with you if I dared." But at that moment there was the slight whispering creak of one of Hoby's best boots heard at the bottom of the stairs, and Helen darted away.

Lacy's eyes remained bent upon the door, thinking of Helen Adair, and wishing the interrupter at the devil, even before he knew who it was; but how much more fervent became the latter operation of his mind, when the maid, who, to do her all manner of justice, had been rather slow in her movements, opened the door, and ushered in no less a personage than Ensign John Williamson, the son of his father's attorney and agent in the country, bearing in his face and in his demeanor that air of swaggering puppyish parvenuism, which, in the state of Lacy's feelings at the moment, was very irritating.

"I thought Helen Adair was here," said Williamson, after a moment's pause.

"I dare say Miss Adair will be here presently," replied Lacy, and the conversation again dropped. Williamson beat his boot with his stick, and Lacy, who could not make up his mind to be anything but disagreeable, took a book off the table, and turned over the leaves, endeavouring, as far as possible, to forget that there was such a being in the room or in the world as Ensign John Williamson. At length the door opened again, after the endurance of about five minutes, and in glided Helen Adair, with that soft languor in her look, which a very few moments of great but pleasant excitement can produce. There were no tears now in her eyes, but the glow was not yet off her cheeks, and certainly, as she entered, Lacy thought her the most beautiful thing that God in all his beautiful creations had ever formed. To him, it was like the sun at noon sweeping away the morning storms, and the clouds quitted his brow and heart as soon as she appeared.

CHAPTER VIII.

HELEN ADAIR entered the room, and as she did so she gave one single glance to Lacy, saw the light that kindled in his eyes at her coming, and then, turning to Williamson, bade him welcome in a tone which was not very cordial, but from which no one could have discovered that his presence was most unwelcome to her. She did not exactly give him her hand, for she had particular reasons of her own for not doing so ; but he, on his part, took it, and shook hands with her warmly. Sitting down nearly opposite to Lacy, she addressed herself first to her new visitor, and asked a few common-place questions about his family, to which he replied at large ; but as soon as an opportunity of changing the topic arrived she looked to Lacy for support, and that very glance made him feel that from that day forth Helen Adair would rely in full confidence on him, and on him alone, in every situation of pain, of difficulty, and of distress. Oh, how pleasant was that feeling to one who loved her as he did ! It took a heavy burden off his mind to know that she was now fully aware of his affection ; “and yet,” he thought, “so little has been said, so few words have passed, that in all probability she will find nothing therein to tell her father ; so that I shall be spared from any premature discussions of points which must require time, and patience, and perseverance to overcome. I must let her see my reasons however,” he continued, revolving the present and the future with all the keen anxiety of an ardent, but not very hopeful, nature, “my reasons for not proceeding boldly, and at once, to claim her hand, or she may still learn to think that I am trifling with her.”

Such were the ideas that passed through Lacy's mind while the first three words hung upon his lips, as he hastened to join in her conversation with young Williamson, and to drag it away from the subject of Mr. Williamson, father—and Mrs. Williamson, mother—and all the masters and misses Williamson, sons and daughters ; so noticing that Helen in the embarrassment of the encounter with young Williamson had taken up a purse she had been pre-

viously netting, and was going on with prodigious rapidity, he seized the first pause to say, as if his whole thoughts were busy with the purse, "Take care, Miss Adair, or you will spoil your purse!"

"How so?" demanded she, looking up with a smile, and still going on.

"Because you are hurrying on so fast," replied Lacy.

"I wished to get it finished to-day," replied Helen, with a slight blush, laying down the purse at the same time, quite satisfied to have done with it, now that the conversation was changed.

"There is a proverb against haste," replied Lacy, giving somewhat of a particular emphasis to his words; "and every one must have seen how often our own eagerness defeats our best schemes, by leading us to hurry the execution of that which ought to be done carefully and delicately."

The aphorism was so grave a one upon so slight a subject, that Helen looked up with a glance of inquiry; but it was young Williamson who replied, "Well now, that is not my way, Captain Lacy," he said. "I say with young Rapid in the play, 'Push along! keep moving!' In war, or in love, it is all the same: never stand still! always keep going on! and the faster the better, hey?"

"I do not agree with you," replied Lacy, coldly; "Miss Adair, you shall be the judge, and as a gallant officer like Mr. Williamson has decided upon what is best in war, I choose my instance in love. We are told on the best authority, that the course of true love never did run smooth; by which must be meant that there are always some difficulties to be encountered, obstacles to be overcome, and dangers to be avoided. Now we will suppose a man deeply, sincerely, unchangeably in love, whose whole happiness for life is staked upon his success, who sees before him nothing but misery and despair, and a long dreary life of comfortless solitude if anything should interpose to destroy his hopes; while if he were successful, the brightest joy, the most certain happiness, the sweet, the balmy cup of domestic peace, would be his without a doubt——"

Young Williamson had taken up the purse which Helen had laid down, and was doing it no good between his fingers and thumbs, but neither Lacy nor Helen saw anything more concerning him, except that his eyes were not upon them; and there was a meaning in Lacy's look, as

well as in his words and tone, which while it showed that he thought their companion a dull fool, made Helen's heart palpitate with a thousand thrilling emotions which she had never felt before, and which in the intensity of their novelty nearly overpowered her. She felt the blushes rushing to her cheek. She felt at every fresh word that he uttered, the tears, the sweet and happy tears of gratified affection rising to her eyes, and as he paused for a moment gazing full upon her, she clasped her hands together with a scarcely perceptible motion, and raised an imploring look to his face, as if she would have said, "Do not go on, I beseech you, if you would not have me betray all that is taking place in this heart."

Lacy read it, and rightly, in a moment, and Williamson, perceiving that there was a pause, looked up. "Well then," continued Lacy, in a lighter and gayer tone, "suppose all this that I have mentioned to be the case; and suppose even that his love be returned, but that he foresees difficulties and opposition upon the part of the lady's parents, or of his own—difficulties that may be removed, opposition that may cease, by the simple exercise of a little patience and prudence. However firmly and unalterably he may be determined ultimately to stake life itself, were it necessary, upon the cast; were it not better to pause, and even leave his love unspoken, than to call such opposition into action, as may perchance overthrow all his hopes in the very outset?"

"Oh, hang prudence," cried young Williamson, "I say no; he had better not wait an hour! No, no, if his love is very ardent and true, he will set parents and friends at defiance—bid them go to the devil—and make a runaway match of it."

"A very dutiful view of the subject," replied Lacy, "but it was to Miss Adair that I appealed; her ideas may be different."

"Oh, very, very far!" replied Helen. "I think if the woman sees, and knows that she is loved, she will fully appreciate the conduct of her lover in waiting, even should it be many long years; and thank him from her very heart for sparing her those pains and distresses which opposition, or even discussion on such a subject must always inflict most dreadfully upon a woman's heart."

"And how much more must he love her for such feelings!" replied Lacy, imprudently enough, for their companion was looking up, and Lacy could scarcely pronounce

those words, without a glance of thanks to her who had so kindly cleared away all his doubts, and fixed his purposes to the right course. Williamson did not appear to see, however, that there was anything particular in the manner of either of his companions; and Lacy, content and happy, suffered the conversation to glide into more general channels; till another knock at the door announced Colonel Adair's return.

By this time the blush which had fluttered so often over Helen's cheek, that it had left it for some time more rosy than usual, had again faded away, and she could calmly say, "That is my father," as she heard the sound. But on his part the young ensign immediately rose and quitted the room, saying that he wished to speak to Colonel Adair for a moment alone. Strange to say, Helen almost trembled to be thus left with the man on all the earth she loved best, but the feelings in her bosom had during that morning so shaken and agitated her, that she feared lest Lacy by another word, ay, or even a look, should again rouse them from the momentary tranquillity into which they had fallen. Lacy saw a glance of apprehension pass over her countenance, and he soon relieved her. "I wish very much, my dear Miss Adair," he said, "to obtain the pleasure of your acquaintance for my cousin, Lady Mary Denham. We have been accustomed from infancy to regard each other as brother and sister, and Mary is sure to take a deep interest in all those that I esteem—I wish it much, especially," he added, in a lower tone, "under present circumstances. May I propose a visit from her to your father?"

"Oh, certainly," replied Helen. "But I do not know whether——"

At that moment, however, Colonel Adair entered the room, as tall and as erect as ever, speaking over his shoulder to young Williamson, who followed him a step behind, like his orderly receiving commands. "Very much obliged to you, sir—very much obliged," he was saying, "but I am happy to say, that it is unnecessary. I feel the intended kindness, though, as much as if I had taken advantage of it, and so I beg you to inform your father. Captain Lacy, I am delighted to see you. Following up your hint of last night, I have just been to the Horse-Guards, and spoken for five minutes to the commander-in-chief; but I find, my enthusiastic young friend, that you have been beforehand with me; and whether our

hopes prove fallacious or not, at all events a thousand thanks for your kind, most kind exertions. Helen, my dear, there is a hope of my getting on active service again—and that through the kind interest of our excellent friend ;” and as he spoke the old officer shook Lacy heartily by the hand ; but a cloud as dark as thunder came over the brow of young Williamson. He could not refrain even from saying, “Do you not think it somewhat late in life to resume the service, colonel ?”

“Oh, no !” the old gentleman replied, good-humouredly, “many an older man than I am never reaches the rank of colonel.”

“And many an older man than Mr. Williamson,” added Lacy, somewhat haughtily, “will be proud to serve under Colonel Adair.”

“Oh, of course,” replied the other, “I only thought your health might suffer in any fatiguing campaign.”

“No fear,” answered Colonel Adair, “though I do confess I am somewhat behindhand, I dare say, in regard to the novelties of the service—I must make haste and get up all the new rules and regulations, for things are always improving ;” and the conversation, deviating into military details, soon became such as would not be at all instructive to the reader.

The hour of noon was now past, and Lacy was beginning to feel some uneasiness from the non-appearance of Mr. Owen Snipes, who on all ordinary occasions was the most punctual man in Europe. In five minutes however he was announced, much to the astonishment of Colonel Adair, who could not conceive who Mr. Owen Snipes could be, till Lacy informed him that he had requested that gentleman to meet him there on business. The explanation was still proceeding when the worthy little lawyer entered the room, bowing with rigid formality to every one it contained, and still between every bow re-elevating his person, till his back presented its usual concave, his stomach its accustomed convex. The first thing his eye fell upon was the clock on the mantle-piece, the sight of which instantly called his own watch from its snug receptacle. “Not right, sir ! not right,” he exclaimed, turning to Colonel Adair, “eight minutes and three quarters too fast, sir ! Not by the Horse Guards, as I term it. It wanted just half a minute to twelve when I put my hand upon the knocker. I always allow half a minute for opening the door and going up-stairs. If the servants keep—

me, I can't help it—theirs is the delict, as I term it.—But God bless my soul, have I not the pleasure of seeing Miss Adair—Why my jewel, my rose-bud, my nightingale, as I term it—why do you know, sir, she sung me out of a fit of the gout, when I was down with my good friend Bellingham at the parsonage, as I term it!”

“I am very happy to hear, sir, that my daughter's singing could have such an effect,” replied Colonel Adair. “It has cheered me under many a heart-ache, but I did not know that it could cure more corporeal ailments.”

Helen willingly admitted the old gentleman's claims to acquaintance, and for some minutes, the conversation turned to the past. At length, however, it became necessary to proceed to business, and equally necessary,—as young Williamson, with the true unconsciousness of a bore, seemed disposed to loiter there the whole day,—to give him a hint to depart. That office would naturally have devolved upon Colonel Adair; but Lacy, who, from an intuitive perception which one sometimes has, that a person is destined to be an annoyance to us through life, disliked as well as despised the young parvenu, took the task upon himself at once, and though he executed it certainly in gentlemanly tone and language, yet undoubtedly he did not do it graciously. Colonel Adair added a few words to soften the matter, and for the time Williamson beat his retreat. Helen Adair also retired, and Mr. Owen Snipes, who was now better aware of the character of the person he had to deal with in Colonel Adair, from all he had heard concerning him from Dr. Bellingham, displayed a degree of tact which surprised Lacy, in covering every little circumstance or particular which could in any degree hurt the feelings of an honourable and independent man, in borrowing money for the first time in his life. The whole transaction was concluded as pleasantly as such a transaction could be; and taking Lacy's arm, the old lawyer walked homeward, leaving Colonel Adair free from the embarrassments which had irritated and distressed him when first we introduced him to the reader.

Mr. Snipes, though he had not had much opportunity of observing Charles, Lacy and Helen Adair, had a good deal of wit of a particular kind, and the use he made of it in this instance, was exemplified in the following speech. “Ho ho! hey, dear sir! Ho ho!” he cried, as soon as he himself and Lacy were at the distance of a hundred yards from the house,—“so the little god, as I term it, has

turned money-lender. Well, well, my dear sir, putting love out of the question, which of course it is in my case, I would have lent the money myself, I do believe, without security, if I had known that it was Helen Adair's father who wanted it."

"Why, my good friend," replied Lacy, "I think from all I said, you might have divined that such was the case."

"Perhaps I might, perhaps I might," answered the man of law; "but I suppose the little purblind gentleman had something to do in blinding my eyes too. But she is, Charles Lacy,—she is a sweet creature, as I term it; and as I am sure you are not a man to trifle with any girl, high or low, I may wish you joy in having chosen one of the most charming and excellent women in Europe; and besides, she is of as good a family as your own. Her grandfather—no, her father's grandfather—was the Earl Adair, who made so large a fortune in India while he was a younger brother; and then his father again, was the Lord Adair, who was sent on an embassy to Spain, in the reign of George the First; and then—but at all events, it is a very suitable match for you in everything but that cursed item, fortune, as I term it. But I am afraid your father will kick at that, my dear young friend."

"I am afraid so too," answered Lacy, "but I am in hopes Colonel Adair may yet mend his fortunes, at least so far as not to bring my father's pride into play against us. The colonel is likely to get into active service, and as we have now the certainty of a sharp war, a thousand things may occur to raise him from the situation into which dame Fortune has cast him."

"But suppose you and he are killed, butchered, put to the sword, as I term it," demanded the little lawyer—"for such things will happen in your very christian and civilised trade, my young friend—what is to become of the poor girl then? From what I see, there she will be, left an orphan without a penny."

"No," answered Lacy, "I was just about to speak to you on that subject. I wish to alter my will, and put in the name of Helen Adair for the Hertford estate. You know it well, for you described it particularly in the last will."

"Know it well! to be sure," replied the lawyer, "worth twenty thousand pounds at least; but you must not do that, my noble captain, as I term it. You may cause"

scandal, and hurt the dear girl's name more than you benefit her pocket. No, no, leave the matter to me; I will manage it, I will manage it, I tell you. I have as much right to leave her a fortune, as you have, Captain Charles; nay, better if you come to that, when for you, she has only as yet made your heart ache; while for me, she made me forget that my heels were aching, as I term it. Ha! ha! ha! as I term it."

"No! but that will not exactly answer my purpose," replied Lacy. "I wish, even if death should take me—which no man who presents himself to loaded muskets can be sure the grim-visaged monster will not do—I wish still to give her some proof of my unaltered, unalterable regard, and therefore I must have my way. No one will ever doubt my motives that knows me, and I should like to see the man who would throw an imputation upon her character."

"What, you would come out of the grave and fight him, eh?" cried Mr. Snipes; "you forget we were calculating upon your being killed. But, no, no! I see how it is, as I term it; you are afraid either that the testy old bachelor should change his mind, or forget, or that he has not twenty thousand pounds to leave. But, as I term it, I never change my mind about such things, when people do not change their conduct; and as to forgetting, when did I ever forget anything in my life? Then regarding the money, Captain Charles, let me tell you, though I do but keep a cook and a parlour wench, I am at least as rich as a Lacy! come!" He spoke half pettishly, half playfully, and then added, "Well, well, I know you will have your own way, and perhaps it is as well; but I will do what I think right too, for it is a good thought which never struck me before. I always thought she was well off. Her father must have run through a good deal of money, for I know a something about his early affairs. I was sent for down to draw the old lord's will, but I could not go, and it was done by another; I mean when he altered his will. But to come back,—as you will have your way, I will tell you how you must manage. You must leave the Hertfordshire estate to her father, for his life; and then to the daughter, naming trustees, that he may not spend it. Then, your leaving it to the father first, will prevent all scandal. Trust to an old bachelor, as I term it, to keep clear of scandal."

"Well, I dare say you are right," replied Lacy, "but

get the will prepared as soon as possible, my good sir; for under present circumstances it would not surprise me to be ordered to join, and be off to the continent in two days' time. You have heard that Buonaparte is in Paris? The information is certain—I had it from the Duke this morning."

"Oh, the monster will be in London before we have done with him yet," replied Mr. Snipes. "I always thought he would. I'll raise a regiment of volunteers myself, and call them the Snipe fencibles, as I term it. I declare I will."

"I think we shall most likely save you the trouble," replied Lacy. "Wherever the British bayonet has appeared, it has carried all before it, and depend upon it that in this case we shall trust the defence of Europe to no other hands but our own. With a Wellington at our head, and a fair field before us, I feel sure that Napoleon's first battle will be the burial place of his power and dynasty."

"Such confidence is the way to make it so, as I term it," replied Mr. Snipes. "But whither go ye just now, my young friend? If you can come with me, and wait half an hour, the will or codicil shall be drawn up and you can sign it."

"I will come in about an hour," replied Lacy; "at present I am going to see Mary."

"Ay! what will she say to these new arrangements?" demanded the old bachelor, elevating his thick eyebrows. "There has been a talk, you know, my young friend; there has been a talk."

"There has been a great deal of nonsense talked," answered Lacy; "but to show you what complete nonsense it is, I am now going to ask Mary to come and visit Miss Adair, in order to give her that sort of countenance and protection, which as yet she is without in London."

"A very good plan," answered Mr. Snipes, "and as you and your cousin know each other best, I have nothing to say against it, only to beg my very reverential respects to her fair merry ladyship, as I term it, assuring her that I wear my beloved pigtail still, notwithstanding her oburgations. My compliments to good Lady Pontypool, who would have now been three thousand a-year richer, if she had followed my advice. I remember my sage remonstrances were all overthrown by a peal of laughter,

caused by her good-for-nothing husband asking if I belonged to the family of Snipes of the Fens, Lincolnshire; but nevertheless my best compliments to her, for she is an excellent woman."

) "She is indeed!" replied Lacy, "but of one thing let me warn you. In regard to this business of Miss Adair, I have been obliged to confide in you entirely, but still it must not even be whispered to any one, especially not to Lady Pontypool; as I have not yet thought it right, from a thousand motives which you may conceive, to propose to Miss Adair."

"Indeed, indeed!" cried the old gentleman, "why I thought I saw a fresh-made declaration, as I term it, still twinkling in the corner of your eye, and burning upon her cheek when I came in this morning. But your secret is quite safe with me. I do not gossip! we lawyers are father confessors to so many men, that if we were to blab one word of what is confided to us, we should deserve to be whipped at the cart's tail. So now fare you well. If you come to me at about three o'clock, you may find me as usual at dinner, and I shall order another mutton chop to be put upon the Escorial, as I term it, which may serve you for luncheon—good bye, good bye!" and giving Lacy two of his fingers, as usual, he left him, in order to pursue his own particular way home.

The reader has doubtless by this time so far entered into the character of Mr. Owen Snipes, that a few words more will be sufficient to explain all that is necessary to be explained in regard to him. Notwithstanding Lord Pontypool's jest upon his name, he was in truth a man of good family, though the small fortune of a younger brother had forced him to labour at the dry study of the law. His having chosen the more lucrative, though what is generally considered the less dignified branch of his profession, had given some umbrage to his family, which he in return had revenged by giving way to all the oddities of a naturally eccentric character. This ended in a complete breach between himself and his nearest relations, which had lasted so many years that those near relations were now extinct. His more distant connections, however, whose dignity and pride were not immediately implicated by the oddities of Mr. Snipes' behaviour, continued their acquaintance with him, and let him do as he liked. Thus whenever he chose to seek the society with which he

was born to associate, it was always open to him, and as his wealth increased, both in reality and in report, many a poor peer was glad to say, "My cousin, Mr. Owen Snipes." Those very connections, however, tended to increase his wealth, for being known to many, and known to be both clever and honest, at the time we speak of he had nearly one-third of the Court Guide for clients.

CHAPTER IX.

WHEN Charles Lacy walked into Lady Mary's drawing-room, he was certainly as handsome a man as any woman not in love would wish to see; and Lady Mary, who under the tuition of De Wint was painting portraits of a number of pots, and pans, and pickling jars abduced from the kitchen, thought him decidedly the handsomest man she had seen in her life—except one!

Lacy was so happy that he was quite full of his own concerns, and wished to speak about them as soon as decency permitted, especially as my Aunt Pontypool was out of the room, and De Wint had just gone; but Lady Mary perceived this disposition upon his part, and with a spice of good-natured malice resolved to tease him a little, and let his eager heart broil on the gridiron of his own impatience. After the first salutation she affected to be eager too, made him examine what she had been painting, then took him to the other side of the room to look at a picture of Stanley's which she had just bought—one of those pictures which at any other time Lacy would have delighted in. It was the representation of a town in France, with the old Gothic buildings fretting, like the rich tracery of their own aisles, the long perspective of the streets; and there were the pretty Norman women in their gay and picturesque dresses, and over all spread a blue airy softness which few can give so well as the hand that painted it. Lacy looked at it and admired it, and declared Stanley to be one of the first, if not the very first painter in his line in England; but Lady Mary was not satisfied, and she would have him look at every particular figure, and examine each line, and each shade, and praise it over and over again, and then suddenly breaking off, she cast herself back on the sofa with her laughing eyes full of gay meaning—which in any other woman, or to any other man, might have been supposed to have a spice of coquetry in it—looking full up in his face while she demanded—“And now, my dear cousin Charles, what is it you want with me?”

Lacy accordingly sat down beside her and told her his

story, and what he wanted her to do. He did not, it is true, exactly say that he was in love with Helen Adair, or that he intended to marry her, if she would marry him; nor did he explain that for these reasons he wished to gain for her the friendship and companionship of one on whose kindness and tenderness he could rely; but he told Lady Mary of Colonel Adair's family and connections, and of his former state and station, and of his present situation, and of the part which his own father, Lord Methwyn, had had therein, and the part which he believed Mr. Williamson, Lord Methwyn's agent, had contributed. Then he explained that Colonel Adair had a daughter, whereupon the smallest ray of laughing light in the world came out of Lady Mary's eyes; but Lacy went on to speak of his acquaintance with her at Dr. Bellingham's, and he told Dr. and Mrs. Bellingham's opinion of her—he did not tell his own—and then he showed that she was for the time in London, living out of the society in which she ought to mingle, and then he stopped.

Now Lady Mary as clearly perceived, as any woman ever did perceive the secrets of a man she was talking with, all that was going on in Lacy's heart, and from the very first mention of Miss Adair, she settled in her own mind that Lacy was in love with her.

She looked up, however, the next minute and said, "Well, Charles, the best thing I can do, then, is to go and call upon her. Besides, I think my Aunt Pontypool knows her already, or, at least, her father, for I have heard her talk of Lords Adair without number, and a Major Adair too, who was a very handsome man in her young days, when, according to her account, poor human nature was a great deal prettier than at present. I think I have heard her tell of his having made a love-match with a clergyman's daughter, and poor dear Aunt Pontypool, you know, always sympathises greatly with people who make love-matches. She keeps a calendar of them, I believe, or at least a list, where those who have done most foolishly stand highest. Well, do not look so grave, Charles; I know all that I am saying is very wicked and very wrong; but you know I may as well laugh at my aunt's list, as there is no earthly chance of my taking my place in it."

"I do not know that at all, Mary," replied her cousin; "it would not surprise me to see you qualified for it to-morrow."

"No, not to-morrow, Charles, that is too soon a great deal," she answered, laughing; "I shall not qualify, as they call it, for a long while, whatever you may do, cousin Charles Lacy. Come, do not tease me, or I will tease you. Why did not you marry me yourself, and then there would have been no fear of my making a love-match you know, or you either, Charles; and I am afraid as it is that you are in a perilous way, my poor cousin."

Lacy was about to reply, but she stopped him, exclaiming, "Peace, peace! let us make peace! I am dull and out of spirits to-day. What day of the week is it? oh, Wednesday—Yes, yesterday was the opera night. Well, when shall I go and call upon Miss Adair? where does she live? is she very pretty? as handsome as I am? Now answer me that, and show yourself either the most impudent or the most faithless man upon the earth! You will never have the face to tell me that she is more beautiful than I am, nor the baseness to declare that I am more beautiful than she is, when you have just been telling her on your knees that she is the loveliest of God's creatures."

"I certainly never told her such a thing in my life," answered Lacy, "whatever I might think; but let us be serious for a few minutes, Mary, for I have a good deal to explain in regard to their situation, which may mingle some pain with the pleasure your visit may give them;" and Lacy having again gained her attention, proceeded to state the position and situation of the dwelling which their very confined circumstances forced them to occupy for the time."

"Oh, but you know, Charles," replied Lady Mary, "that I care nothing about that. It is a sweet girl in misfortune, and a gentlemanly old man in undeserved adversity, that I go to see; not their lodgings or their furniture. But here comes my Aunt Pontypool, and of course we must ask her opinion upon all these matters."

Lacy rose and shook hands with Lady Pontypool with the warmth of regard which he really felt towards her, fully expressed in his manner; but her ladyship looked a little embarrassed, and proceeded to let Lacy know that Major Kennedy's visit that morning had been in fact to her, as she had expressed a wish to have a book of the new opera, and he had brought her one. This was done in as quiet and easy a tone as possible, and she took care not to look in the least towards Lady Mary, who, for her

part, blushed like a rose, and wished with all her heart that she had told her cousin of Major Kennedy's visit before her aunt came in.

But Lacy, on the other hand, knew my Aunt Pontypool well enough to be only amused; and replied with a gay smile, "On my word, my dear Lady Pontypool, Kennedy's attentions to you are becoming very marked. The world is beginning to talk, I can assure you. Why, last night he was so deep in conversation with you that no one had any chance. Had he but addressed a word or two to Mary," he proceeded, with a gay look to his cousin, "the matter would not have been so particular. I only speak of it, you know, because sometimes ladies go so far before they are aware, that it is impossible to retract with honour."

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense, Charles," cried the worthy lady, blushing like a girl of fifteen, "how can you talk so to an old woman? I am old enough to be his mother. I am sure it was not to me his attentions were directed."

Lacy had a great mind to ask if Mary were not their object then; but he saw that his fair cousin was uneasy, and though he looked the question quite sufficient to make Mary feel that he was sparing her, he did not give it utterance. Mary resolved to have an opportunity of sparing him some day, but in the meantime she hastened to turn the conversation into another channel by inquiring, "My dear aunt, did you not once know a Major Adair?"

"Certainly," answered Lady Pontypool, "because he was my second cousin. His father, the Honourable Augustus Adair, married my mother's first cousin, Lady Sarah Bluit, who was great grand-daughter to the famous Lord ——"

"Oh, never mind, never mind whose great grand-daughter she was, my dear aunt," interrupted Lady Mary, "I never can recollect whose great grand-daughter I am myself. But this is the most delightful thing in the world. If he be your second cousin, his daughter must be my third cousin."

"If he have a daughter," replied Lady Pontypool, "but I did not know he had a daughter."

This doubt stopped Lady Mary's spirits, which were beginning to overflow again, after having cast off a momentary embarrassment which the comments of her aunt and Lacy on Major Kennedy's visit had occasioned. "If.

he have a daughter!" she exclaimed; "how very provoking to doubt it, my dear aunt. Come, tell us what became of your Major Adair. Did he die? Was he killed? Did his horse fall and fracture his skull? In short, my dear aunt, what became of him? Can you tell?"

"Really, Mary, you are very odd," replied Lady Pontypool: "what signifies to you what became of him? But if you want to know, as far as I ever heard he may be alive now. He was in the army, as you know, and afterwards he rose to the rank of colonel; but about that time, poor fellow! he married a clergyman's daughter, on which his grand-father disinherited him, and he had nothing but his mother's fortune, which was small. He went to join the army in Spain, and after that I never heard anything more of him, except that he was severely wounded at Albuera."

"Oh, it is the same—I am sure it is the same!" cried Lady Mary, "and she is my third cousin, that is to say, for short, my cousin. So I have more right to her than you, Charles; and you shall have nothing to do with her, Captain Lacy, except under my permission; and I will go and see her this very day. Nay, you need not speak a word, Charles—I am determined. Have I not a right to see my own cousin when I like?"

"But is she in town?" demanded Lady Pontypool: "and what is become of her father?"

"Father and daughter are both in town," answered Lady Mary, "Lacy has just told me of their being here; but they are very poor, my dear aunt, and very uncomfortably lodged, so that it is the more necessary that we should go and see them directly."

"Oh, certainly!" cried Lady Pontypool; "but cannot you have them here, Mary? There is plenty of room in this house; and Colonel Adair was one of the most charming men in the world. Cannot you have them here to stay with you for a time?"

"Certainly, if they like to come," answered Lady Mary; "but we must not hurry matters too much, my dear aunt, lest their pride take alarm. Let us go and see them first, and then find what and how much we can do to serve them without hurting their feelings."

"Spoken like yourself, Mary!" said Lacy, "ever considerate and kind."

"Ay, Charles!" she answered, "am not I a very charming girl now? I knew you would think so at last."

I dare say we might have made a very happy couple, if we had chosen to follow the plan the world laid out for us. It is a pity it is too late."

Lady Pontypool heard in wonder, and concluding there had been some quarrel between the cousins, set herself seriously to reconcile them, vowing that it was never too late, &c. Lady Mary laughed, and Lacy, to change the subject, related his adventures of the preceding night, after he had left them at the door of the opera-house.

"Is it possible?" cried Lady Mary; "why, Charles, I did not know that such misery could exist. I thought that there was always a place in every parish where the poor could get immediate relief, and that no one need know such a thing as starvation."

"That is true certainly, Mary," answered Lacy; "but I am sorry to say that at those places the impudent and the rascally too often gain the means of vice and indolence, while the really poor, the honest, and the virtuous, rather choose to starve than take advantage of an institution which by one means or another has combined degradation and relief so intimately, that they cannot be separated. Depend upon it no year passes in London, without more than one person dying of actual want."

CHAPTER X.

"My dear Helen," said Colonel Adair, going to the door of his daughter's room, as soon as Lacy and Mr. Snipes were gone, "you have not been out for three days, and if you will get ready, I will take you for an hour to Hyde Park. You will be stifled with the smoke and closeness of this great city, if we go on thus."

Helen gladly promised to be ready directly; but it was in vain that she kept her promise, for she had scarcely reached the drawing-room, and Colonel Adair had scarcely taken up his hat, when Mr. Williamson was announced, and in walked a broad-made corpulent man, neither very tall nor very short, but certainly very rosy in the face, with flat and somewhat unmeaning features, only enlivened by a pair of keen black eyes. His hair was short and grizzled, determinedly straight in all its lines, and yet not lying down flat, but standing up here and there, especially upon the temples, with a sort of stiff rigidity which argued an obstinate disposition in the hair, at least, if not in the man. His air was peculiar, but it was an air easily acquired by successful country attorneys; decided, bustling, not quite bullying, but something near it; quite confident in his own powers of ruling, directing, opposing, overcoming, and if necessary overreaching anybody with whom he might be brought in contact. In fact, it was the air of habitual success and petty authority.

Colonel Adair received Mr. Williamson's shake of the hand very cordially, notwithstanding all that Lacy had said; thinking, "I have known Williamson much longer than this quick and enthusiastic young man has done, and can judge of him well enough to feel sure that he can explain his conduct satisfactorily." Helen was a little more backward in returning his salutation, not that she doubted his honesty any more than her father; but it was that there was a sort of instinctive apprehension of something disagreeable being about to happen in regard to herself and young Williamson, which made her shrink from all the family.

"Well, my dear Miss Helen," cried Mr. Williamson,

"as blooming and beautiful as ever, I see! on my honour I don't wonder at all the broken hearts you have left behind you in the country! I have not seen anything half so pretty since you quitted us. But we must inveigle you back again, eh, colonel? Cannot we entice you, eh? was quite surprised to hear that you were gone!"

"Why how could you think I would stay, Williamson?" demanded Colonel Adair. "After such an exposure and disgrace as I had been subjected to, you could not imagine that the neighbourhood could retain any very great charms for me, I am sure."

"Nay, nay, you take it too seriously, my dear sir," replied the attorney; "though to tell you the truth, I would rather have cut off my right hand; yet what could I do, colonel? when my Lord Methwyn ordered it, I was bound to obey, and you would make no offer, you know—you would make no proposal which I could transmit to him."

"I had no offer or proposal to make," replied Colonel Adair, "except indeed that he should wait for his money, and that I did not choose to propose to any man. But tell me, Williamson—Colonel Lacy assures me that his father declares you must have greatly mistaken him, for that he never gave any authority for the measures which were taken. I tell you the fact simply because I think you ought to know it; not that I either doubt your word, or suppose that you would act harshly or unkindly to one of my family."

"I should be the most ungrateful rascal in Europe if I did," replied Williamson, "but his lordship very often forgets what he writes, and the worthy captain, you know, my dear colonel, may wish a little to screen his father's reputation. But ask yourself, my dear friend, what motive I could have in exceeding my directions. Indeed I had every motive to do the contrary, and I confess that I did not go to the extent I ought to have done, in accordance with my legal duty and the orders I received. But the captain, of course, who is a younger man, and not quite so strict as his father, would endeavour to soften the matter." Helen glided out of the room, and Mr. Williamson continued: "But, my dear sir, I think the proposal I sent you this day by my son, because I could not come so soon myself, was proof positive that I wished anything on earth rather than to hamper or inconvenience you. Could I have commanded it, believe me I would

have advanced at once the whole sum that you owed Lord Methwyn, and as soon as I could scrape the eleven hundred pounds together that you still owe, I sent my boy to offer it."

"I begged him to thank you, as such kindness deserved," replied Colonel Adair, "but to tell you that I had already made such an arrangement as rendered it unnecessary for me to accept it."

"Oh, yes, he told me, he told me," replied Williamson, "he told me that Captain Lacy had lent the money, and that therefore you no longer needed it. I said, 'Damn it, he has never borrowed the money of the son of a man who sold off his whole stock,' I confess, at first; but after a little I thought it the best thing you could do."

Colonel Adair did not interrupt him, though he felt a great inclination, but when the other had done, he replied, "Your son, my good friend, made a great mistake, and suffered his imagination to interfere where he should not; Captain Lacy did not lend the money, neither did I ever seek to borrow of the son of a man who has treated me as Lord Methwyn has. I procured the money from another person, and am now ready to pay it into your hands as Lord Methwyn's agent, if you have a receipt."

"Oh yes, oh yes!" replied the lawyer, "I am always armed and well prepared, as the play-actor says;" and thereupon he produced a large black leather pocket-book from the yawning mouth of his pocket, and drawing out a stamp wrote thereon a receipt for eleven hundred pounds, which sum he received at the same time from the hands of Colonel Adair. "Well now, colonel," continued the lawyer, while the money was in transit through his fingers and he was in the act of counting it, "well now, my dear colonel, to give you the strongest proof in the world—five hundred and seventy—that so far from having one motive to—six hundred—seek to injure or embarrass you—six hundred and fifty—I have a proposal to make to you this very day—how the notes stick to my fingers—ha, ha, ha, a good sign! seven hundred—which will at once prove to you that—seven hundred and fifty—I have every inducement which parental affection—eight hundred—can afford, to study your interests and promote your fortune—eight hundred and fifty. About six months ago—nine hundred—my son confided to me, that he had—nine hundred and fifty. Very troublesome these small notes!—that he had conceived a deep, strong, and lasting affection

for your daughter—a thousand—whom you know he has had so many occasions of seeing, and conversing with—a thousand and fifty—but I said to him, Son, you had better wait till—one thousand, and ninety-three pounds, eleven; quite right, my dear colonel—wait till you have made some progress in the young lady's affection, and have some standing in the army, and by that time I dare say that I shall be able to make you up such a little fortune as may enable you to propose with some chance of success. Now, my dear colonel, I have been a tolerably fortunate man, as you know, and I can very well afford to give my son—though ready money is scarce,” he added, being much too shrewd a personage to forget that he had not been able to assist Colonel Adair, when Colonel Adair most needed assistance—“though ready money is scarce I can very well afford to give my son the little farm of Northwesterton, about eight hundred per annum, and perhaps, in a year or two, may add something more, with the certainty of his having unencumbered full two thousand per annum at my death. Now, do not misunderstand me, my dear sir! I am aware that you must think of the antiquity of your family, &c., that we are but mushrooms, and all that; and I had hoped that my son might have had an opportunity of distinguishing himself in his profession, before he came to the point; but we cannot help seizing the present moment; because it must give you the strongest proof that our motives towards you are those of regard, and that to suppose I would—unless compelled by duty—do anything even to annoy you, is as absurd as to suppose that I would injure myself.”

It would have been difficult even for a close watcher of the human face to have caught and analysed all the various shades of expression which passed over the countenance of Colonel Adair, as his ears were gratulated by this somewhat long speech from the lips of Mr. Williamson. There was certainly surprise: perhaps, pride too might for a moment cast a deeper shadow over his broad but furrowed brow. Then came other feelings to struggle with the last, growing out of the remembrance of all he had encountered through life, from the painful shackles of narrow circumstances, and the prospect of saving his daughter from similar miseries. All this—strengthened by the thought that the very means he was seeking for the purpose of raising himself from his present difficulties, might lead him to a grave, and leave her an orphan in the wide

and lonely world—all this led him to listen with some degree of pleasure, to the proposal of the lawyer, which gave birth to a faint smile, which was almost as quickly extinguished by cold dislike to the young man himself. He had time, however, to let thought wander over all contingencies during Mr. Williamson's speech, which was not only long but slow; and when the lawyer had come to an end he answered a part of it though not the whole. "My dear sir," he said, "I feel that your conduct is an unanswerable refutation of everything that can be said against you, in regard to the unfortunate affair between Lord Methwyn and myself; and in regard to family pride, you know at what expense I put my foot upon the head of that monster in former years, so that you may very easily imagine I should not suffer it to conquer me in my daughter's case, when I trampled upon it in my own. It is sometimes, however, a serviceable monster, too, and the only things which I can conceive powerful enough to overcome it, are love—sincere and mutual love,—and individual worth and honesty. Now, the latter doubtless your son possesses!"—and he made a bow,—“but have you any reason to suppose that the former exists between himself and my daughter?”

"I cannot tell that exactly," replied Mr. Williamson; "they have been a good deal together, you know, from their infancy, and that he loves her as ardently as any man can love, I can take upon myself to assert; but it would be presumption in me, you know, to suppose that he had gained the young lady's affections before he had even asked them. However, his regard for her is not at all of a common kind, I can assure you, colonel, and I do believe, which Heaven forbid! that if he were to fail it would be the death of him. He is very diffident too, and all he asks on the present occasion is, to be permitted to pursue his addresses with your knowledge and approbation."

"Does he mean without Helen being aware of his proposal?" demanded Colonel Adair; "for if she be once made acquainted with it, you well know that she must and will, without hesitation, give her final reply at once. My daughter, Williamson, is not a person to trifle with any man for a single moment."

"Certainly not, certainly not," replied the lawyer, who, notwithstanding all that a tolerable store of family conceit could do, had shrewdness enough to suspect that his son had not made a thorough conquest yet of Miss Adair's

heart. "But the boy is so diffident, you see, colonel," he continued, "and therefore he is desirous of pursuing his addresses to Miss Adair with your knowledge and approbation, but without speaking to her upon the subject, till he has had a further opportunity of cultivating her regard, or of ingratiating himself with her, as I may say."

Colonel Adair rose, and took a thoughtful turn up and down the room, with a good deal of care in his fine gentlemanly countenance. At length he paused again, and replied, "Well, Williamson, I have no objection to the matter going on as it is, and your son having his chance: if he win my daughter's regard, so as to make her desirous to give her hand to him, I will not object, and nothing like family pride shall stand in the way. But remember, I give no promise, and as I shall not open my lips upon the subject to Helen, it is from her your son must receive his final answer when he chooses to seek it. All I engage for is, to make no opposition to his suit, if it be favoured by Helen."

"All I could wish! all I could desire!" replied Mr. Williamson, who calculated much upon those powers and accidents in favour of his son, which, in his own case, had rendered him a very successful man through life—"all I could wish, my dear colonel! and now with infinite satisfaction I shall leave the boy to make his own way as he can."

A few more commonplace words then passed between the two, and Mr. Williamson, who had a strong opinion that life was made for business, and that when business was concluded there was nothing else to be said, took his hat, and his leave, and rolled down-stairs. Colonel Adair thought for a moment or two not very pleasantly of his Helen marrying young Williamson; but then he remembered all the disinterested kindness which the father had displayed towards him, and gulping his distaste he opened the door, exclaiming, "Helen, Helen, my love, are you ready? We shall never get our walk in the park."

Helen came down immediately, and took up her gloves, which she had left upon the drawing-room table, put the silk purse—which she had carried off with her, to net in her own room, while her father and Mr. Williamson talked of business—into the handsome work-box which we have before mentioned, and was in the act of turning the little silver key thereof, when the roll of a carriage

which was passing down the street, ended in a rush and clatter at the door below, and then came one of those loud and bellowing knocks at the door, which are not within the competence of any other fist than that of a London footman.

Colonel Adair and Miss Adair paused. They were the only lodgers in the house, but they were unacquainted with anybody in London; or, if the colonel had acquaintances there, they were those of former years, sunshiny friends, he thought, who would be little likely to spread their butterfly wings to see him, now that the cloud of adversity shadowed him, even if they knew where to find him, which it was impossible they should do now. "It is some mistake," he thought, and Helen calmly thought so likewise; but still they stood ready to go out upon their expedition, as soon as these visitors by mistake should have discovered their error and driven away.

At length, however, the maid opened the drawing-room door. She was luckily at that moment in a state of unwonted tidiness, and Helen's eye glanced over her person with more satisfaction than usual as she announced, "Lady Pontypool and Lady Mary Denham." At those names Colonel Adair's mind travelled through the record, and thought of the mighty change in him and his, which had taken place since last he had seen one, at least, of the persons now announced. He had been then in youth, if not in prosperity—but why should I say if not in prosperity? He had been prosperous then, for he was happy: he was in possession of her he loved, and had a fund of satisfaction in the thought of having cast away family pride for her sake, and had, as he deemed it, an inexhaustible stock of joy in herself, and besides all that, a mine of wealth in rich hopes. He had competence too, and peace, and love; and now youth was gone, the season of his days had changed, and winter was upon his brow, and in his heart; the light of joy he seldom saw, and even the spring of hope was frozen over by the frost of years. Oh, it is ever a sad meeting with those we have known long ago in the bright and summer days of youth! Colonel Adair glanced his eye round his poor lodging, and his head for a moment drooped forward, but the next instant he heard a step upon the stairs, and he turned his look upon his daughter, as she stood beside him in that native loveliness and inborn grace which nothing can add to, and nothing diminish. He found pride and firmness

there, and, raising up his head to its full height, he advanced with an air of military ease to bid his noble cousins welcome.

Lady Mary had made Lady Pontypool go first, and that excellent personage walked up-stairs rather slowly; but when she entered the room there was a kind and benevolent smile upon the old lady's countenance, which was worth a great many letters of introduction. Colonel Adair took her hand—it had been a fair white hand when last he touched it, but it was sadly wrinkled now—"Lady Pontypool, I am delighted to see you," he said, "though it is many years since we met, and many changes have happened to us both."

"Many, indeed, cousin Adair," she replied, "but we won't talk about such disagreeable things, if you please. I am very constant; I love no changes, cousin."

Lady Pontypool's speech gave Helen the first idea of the relationship between her father and their visitors, for Colonel Adair, with the best sort of pride, seldom if ever mentioned any of his noble relations. The next moment, however, a very lovely and fashionably-dressed girl followed Lady Pontypool into the room, and passing round Colonel Adair and Lady Pontypool with calm ease, she took both Miss Adair's hands in hers, and with a gay but kindly smile, kissed her glowing cheek. "And so you do not know me, Miss Adair," she said, still holding her hands. "Well, how should you now? since you never saw me before in your life; and yet we are cousins; and I love you already with all my heart."

There was something at the same time so gentle, so natural, so sincere in the way that she spoke, and Helen's heart had been so long struggling, for her father's sake, to overpower all feeling of adversity, that those kind words opened the magic fountain of emotions, and the tears swam in her beautiful eyes. "Nay, nay," continued Lady Mary, "my cousin Charles Lacy has been talking to me about you all the morning." The blood rushed up quick into Helen's cheeks, and Mary, who thought within herself, "Well, she is certainly the loveliest creature I ever saw," went on to tell how she had discovered the relationship, which Charles Lacy did not know. She spoke rapidly, for she had seen in a moment that every word concerning Lacy touched some chord of very quick vibration in Helen's heart; and, with the true female tact for all that relates to love, she hurried over the subject as fast as possible.

have done with it before Lady Pontypool and Colonel Adair had concluded the first periphrasis of recognition. She had scarcely got to the end, however, and was establishing herself very fast in Helen's affections, when my Aunt Pontypool turned round and drew Colonel Adair's attention towards her by saying, "But you do not know my niece, Lady Mary Denham, and as her mother was your second cousin too, she is your third cousin."

"Simply cousin, if you please, Aunt Pontypool," replied Lady Mary; "do not you know that every one under the rank of an Earl's wife, takes only the title of Lady, and so all people under the relationship of brother and sister, take simply the title of cousin? So we will not count first, second, and thirds, if you please, Colonel Adair; but I will be simply your cousin, Mary Denham, and if Helen here has no objection, we will reverse the order usual in genealogy, and, being her father's cousin, I will be her sister. How it will puzzle the heralds, Helen, when they hear of it! but we will not mind that. Do you agree?"

"Oh, with all my heart;" answered Helen; "Captain Lacy was mentioning Lady Mary Denham as his cousin to-day, but I had no notion——"

"That she was your sister," joined in Lady Mary—"it was very wrong of you, Colonel Adair, never to tell your daughter that you had other children."

"I am sure, had I known that I had such children as you, my dear young lady," replied Colonel Adair, "I should have felt but too proud in mentioning them; but I did not feel sure that they might like to recognise even a parent in poverty and adversity."

"Out upon all such children, or relations either!" cried Lady Mary; "out upon all such as know any difference of regard, whether in prosperity or adversity! Out upon them, and fie upon them all!"

"I am sure you are not one of them, Mary," added Lady Pontypool; "for the more adverse have been my circumstances, the more attached to me did you and my poor sister seem to become, and now that I am quite dependent upon you, you treat me more as if you were dependent upon me."

"And she rewards me by saying something as disagreeable as that every day, Colonel Adair," cried Lady Mary. "My dear aunt, you are incorrigible. But, Helen, you have got on your bonnet and shawl; are you going out, or have you just come in?"

"My father was going to take me to walk in the park," replied Helen; "but it is of no consequence; I would really rather stay at home. I do not wish to go."

"But why should you stay at home?" cried Lady Mary; "I am going there too; you and your papa shall come with me. It will only save you a walk through the dull streets, and when we reach the park, we will get out and walk. He shall be my Aunt Pontypool, and I will be you, Helen; and then I will show you all my lovers—such a menagerie of them! but you must not run away with any from me; I cannot spare a single one for very vanity's sake."

Helen looked at her father for permission, but he was proud of his child, and he would suffer no other kind of pride to deprive her of the society and friendship of relations, such as those who now sat beside her.

"Your carriage must be very capacious, or else we shall incommode you, Lady Mary," he said.

"Oh! the carriage will hold a thousand when necessary," replied Lady Mary. "It is built partly on the model of Noah's ark, and partly on that of the sheriff of Middlesex's state vehicle; and I can assure you it will incommode me much more if Helen and yourself do not come with us; because I am so accustomed to be spoiled by all who come near me, and to do what I like with every one, that I do not know how I should behave the first time I was contradicted."

Colonel Adair made no further opposition, and within ten minutes after Helen had first learned that she had two noble and affectionate relations in London, she was seated with them in Lady Mary's equipage, and rolling on towards the park. As they went, Lady Mary applied herself industriously to make Colonel Adair forget a great many things that might otherwise have come up unpleasantly to remembrance; first, to forget that he had never seen her before; and next, to forget that he was poor, and she was rich; and above all, to forget that any human creature could ever, by any possible stretch of folly, value another human being in proportion to his wealth. With Helen, who had no knowledge of the world, Lady Mary Denham might well be successful at once, especially as Miss Adair could not help remarking a resemblance between her manners and those of Captain Lacy, though he was certainly more grave, and she more gay; but with Colonel Adair, as a man of the world, the matter was of course more diffi-

cult ; and yet Lady Mary's tact, in all kind-hearted policy, was so keen, and her demeanour, though gay as the song of the skylark, was so engaging, that with the old officer too she was perfectly triumphant. He felt that she was the kindest creature in existence ; but he felt not that she was making any particular effort to be kind to him and his. It was all so easy, and so natural, and yet so ardent and so eager, that it seemed as if they were conferring an obligation upon Lady Mary Denham, by giving her their society, rather than that she favoured them by seeking it.

When they had passed the little old milk-house which stood at the gate, near the top of Grosvenor-street, they left the carriage and proceeded on foot, with the servant following. Lady Mary and Helen walked somewhat faster than the Colonel and Lady Pontypool, and Miss Adair, without intending to confess a word, or having the slightest idea that she was betraying anything which she would have wished to conceal, was soon without one secret hid from the keen eyes of Lady Mary Denham. Happy was it for Helen that the heart which directed those eyes was as honest and true a heart as ever yet was, and as kind a heart too ; but it is not impossible that the very intuitive perception of such being the case, did make Helen less upon her guard than she otherwise would have been ; and, though she certainly had no idea of betraying herself as it was, yet, had she had the slightest doubt of Lady Mary Denham's good faith and kindness, she would have entrenched herself behind barriers which could not be passed. The way, however, in which she did betray herself was very natural, and was not brought about by any one question upon the part of Mary Denham, who, on the contrary, as soon as she began talk of Charles Lacy, which was one of the first subjects she chose, had nearly all the conversation to herself. " And so, my dear Helen, you have known my cousin Charles a long time ? " she demanded ; " is he not a very charming creature ? "

Helen blushed a little, but not much, and contrived to reply, " I always thought him very agreeable. "

" Then I am sure you do not think him less so upon longer acquaintance, " rejoined Lady Mary. " Do you know, my fair cousin, that all the world says I and Charles Lacy are going to be married to each other ? "

For a single instant, all strength seemed gone from the limbs of Helen Adair, her cheek grew deadly pale, and she had nearly fallen ; all that she had heard of the baseness

and levity with which men can sometimes sport with a woman's heart, flashed across her mind during that moment ; but the next, a strong abiding confidence in Lacy's honour and integrity came back like balm to her heart, and the colour again mounted up to her cheek, glowing more and more warmly, as she felt, perhaps for the first time fully, from the emotions which she then experienced, how deeply and truly she loved him. Lady Mary, too, saw the outward effect of those emotions, the sudden paleness, and then the warm and brightening blush, too well to doubt what Helen's feelings really were ; and sorry for having pained her, she hastened to bring comfort, thinking at the same time, however, "It is well that I am not in love with Charles myself, for I should have a sad dangerous rival here, especially if she goes on blushing and turning pale with him in the same way as she does with me."

"All the world says so, Helen," she proceeded aloud, with scarcely a break in the period she had begun with,—for all these mental operations on both parts occupied barely a second :—"All the world says so, Helen, but all the world is a great fool ! and, though you will hear it in twenty places, do not believe a word of it, my sweet cousin."

"No, indeed, I will not," replied Miss Adair, with such a tone of sincerity that Mary had nearly been betrayed by it into a smile at her simplicity. She went on gaily, however, adding to what she had been saying before, "and so, Helen, as I do not intend to marry him myself, and have by no means settled amongst all my other friends, whom I shall honour in that way, I give you full leave and liberty to captivate and keep him to yourself, provided you are upon honour with me and do not attempt to steal any of my other guests and lovers."

Helen smiled and blushed too, for there was matter for both in the agreement Lady Mary proposed. She felt very happy, however, for to hear such a thing as her captivating and keeping to herself a being so noble and so charming as Charles Lacy, spoken of familiarly as the most natural event in the world, more impressed upon her mind the reality of her own situation in regard to him than anything she had yet heard. All that had passed between herself and him in the morning,—Lacy's own words, and her own feelings,—had been but like a happy dream, which wanted the tangible reality of waking things. Now, however, she went on to feel that it was true, and as she found all these

emotions working in her heart and went on to examine and consider them, she fell into a fit of musing, in which Lady Mary indulged her for a few minutes, and then roused her with some gay remark upon her thoughtfulness, Helen blushed as she replied, but Mary did not press her unkindly, and thenceforth the conversation proceeded in uninterrupted cheerfulness till it was time to return homeward.

CHAPTER XI.

IF any one can recollect the events which took place some twenty years ago, and will take the trouble of doing so, he will remember what a tremendous bustle agitated London during the time which in the little world of France is emphatically called the hundred days. That bustle had been sighing up like the first beginning of a storm during the two or three mornings which preceded the exact epoch whereat we have commenced this voracious history.

Although nothing positively was known, though no real information even of Napoleon's landing had been received, yet a thousand vague reports had been busy in the London air.

Manifold were the comings and goings in the streets of London. The offices at the Horse Guards were crowded to suffocation, the newspaper offices were besieged, the sound of every horn was listened for, and extraordinary Gazettes were nothing extraordinary at all. We have already seen how Charles Lacy had passed one of those bustling days; and we have shown how they were passed by Colonel Adair and Helen; but those that followed were to be passed in a very different manner by all those persons. On the morning subsequent to that the events of which we commemorated in our last chapter, while Lacy was yet at breakfast, and before his father had made his appearance, two ominous-looking official packets were put into his hands, with a name written in the corner, which plainly indicated whence they came. The first which Lacy opened, was an order to join within a certain time, and his mind instantly wandered to the corner of Bond Street, and thence to the corner of Grosvenor Place, with sundry speculations concerning canteens and chargers, as he had not been in activity for nearly a year, into all of which we shall not inquire. After he had thus pondered for a moment or two, he turned to the other packet, wondering what it could contain; and, on breaking the seal, found within a letter; while the envelope displayed the following words:—"Sir, I am commanded by his Royal Highness the Commander-in-chief, to request that you would forward the enclosed to

Lieutenant-Colonel Adair, late of the — regiment, and now appointed to the command of the — regiment of —; or, in case of his not being on the spot, transmit it to his agent. I have the honour to be," &c.

"Never does he fail to do a kind thing, in the kindest manner," thought Lacy, as he reflected on the fact of the Duke's sending the notification of Colonel Adair's appointment to him, instead of transmitting it in the usual course. "This will indeed be gratifying news to the veteran: but he must not remain in ignorance of it a moment longer than can be helped;" and ringing the bell, he ordered his own servant to be sent to him directly. The man was not long in obeying his summons, and on entering the room he found his master in the act of writing a few hasty lines to Colonel Adair, begging him not to go out till he had seen him. "We are ordered on active service, William," said Lacy—the man bowed; "take that to the lodgings of Colonel Adair, Number — in — Street, running out of Swallow Street;" the man bowed again. "Then go to Tattersall's, see what he has got that is likely to suit me, come back at one, and report!"

The servant proceeded on his errand, muttering to himself—"Colonel Adair! Colonel Adair! hum! ha! Colonel Adair!" and between Portman Square and Swallow Street, he had repeated over at least half a dozen times that somewhat insignificant concatenation of sounds, "Colonel Adair! hum! ha! Colonel Adair!" When he came, however, to the street unto which his master had directed him, he looked at it for several minutes before he turned down, muttering—"it can never be here!" but, convinced at length that he was right, he proceeded to the number which he had been directed to seek, and after long contemplation of the house, knocked at the door. When it was opened his proceeding was somewhat singular, for instead of giving Lacy's note to the maid-servant, he demanded to see Colonel Adair, and having been gratified in that request, delivered the note to his own hands, taking considerable note of the old gentleman's appearance, as well as of the furniture, &c., of the room. When he had done, he bowed and retired, and after he had reached the farther end of the street he muttered, "Colonel Adair! hum! ha! Colonel Adair! This puzzles me!" but he said no more, either to himself or any one else, and thence wended on his way to Tattersall's. What he there beheld did not please him, and after taking a

cursory glance into many a stall, he turned upon his heel and plodded his way back to Portman Square.

On his approach to the house of Lord Methwyn, he found his master on the step, as if he had been stayed in the very act of going out, by a tall, powerful man who was speaking to him. The servant paused at a respectful distance, and Lacy went on with what he was saying. "I am very sorry that I am going out," he said, "for I should have much liked, Mr. Green, to have heard all about your family. Can you call upon me about six this evening, when I shall certainly be home to dress for dinner?"

"Why, sir, you see I shall have a good deal to do," replied Adjutant Green; "though I am upon leave, yet I have a good deal of the regimental business to attend to. I never forget the regiment—and as we are likely soon to have some smart work, I take it I must look about me, for when first I was made an officer in his Majesty's service, I said to myself, says I, now Green, if you are a gentleman as I take you to be, behave as such, and act accordingly—but I am only keeping you, Captain Lacy. However, the matter is this, I have one or two things concerning the regiment, which will keep me for two or three hours; then I have to see my poor brother in the hospital, which any how will keep me two more, and then I promised my niece Louisa to try and get her a place, poor girl: for though I can manage to set up my sister in a shop when she gets well, and dare say she will get on, yet as she will have Bill the boy, and herself to provide for, I wish to make a diversion in her favour by getting Louisa a place as lady's maid, which she can do well enough, as she is a handy, tidy, little thing—always was."

"Perhaps amongst my friends in London I can forward your views in that respect," said Lacy; "if so, Mr. Green, I need not tell you to apply to me without hesitation."

"I thank you, sir," replied the soldier. "I always knew you were a gentleman, and inclined to act accordingly; but there is another gentleman here, somewhat older than you are, who has been a good friend to me when I needed one, and who might think me ungrateful if I applied to any one before him, and so if I can find him like, I will just speak to him first. Then, if I cannot find him, I'll apply to you Captain Lacy with all my heart; though, you see, you are but a young gentleman to recommend a pretty little girl like Louisa, to a situation, and it might do her reputation no good, you know, sir."

Lacy smiled, though he could not but feel that there was a great deal of good sense in Adjutant Green's objection. "Well, Green, well!" he said, "my only object, you know, is to serve you, and I shall be very happy to do so, if I can; but of course, I should not recommend your niece to any one who did not know me well enough to feel sure that my motives were right ones. So let me know the result of your application."

"That I will, sir, certainly," replied Adjutant Green, "and I only called to-day to tell you that my poor sister was a great deal better for the stuff the doctor sent her, and also for good wholesome rations, and for being removed out of that wretched place, like. I won't offer to pay you back, Captain Lacy, the money you were good enough to give the poor soul before I came, for that would be petty pride, like, and not like a gentleman, as I dare say it did your heart good to give it, and much good may it do you still; but I dare say you would like to hear what I did with those damned dogs, and cocks. Why, at first I was in so great a rage about them, to think that my poor sister had been starving, while they were fed, that I ordered the two to be tied together in a sack, and thrown into the Thames, and the two cocks to have their necks wrung, and be made into broth; but as I got cooler, like, my sister, and Loo, and the boy, all set-to, and persuaded me to have them sold, and one fool of a fellow gave more than a hundred guineas for the lot. I remember when I was just such another ninny myself, but now I know better, and I have put by the money for my brother, so that if ever he gets out of bed again, there may be something before his hand. But I won't keep you any longer. So good morning, Captain."

"Good morning, Green!" replied Lacy. "If you cannot come this afternoon, you will find me to-morrow morning at this hour, almost to a certainty;" and so saying, Lacy turned and walked away in the direction of Colonel Adair's little lodging. As soon as he was gone, his servant William, who touched his hat to him in passing, approached the door, which had been held open by the fat and grumbling porter, during all this confabulation between the young gentleman and Adjutant Green; and as he did so, William Newton, who, as we have before said, was a calm, prudent, and taciturn personage, passed close by Adjutant Green, staring him in the face as he came near.

Green looked at him also, and for a moment seemed

about to pass him with a true parade step, and utter unconsciousness of countenance, but suddenly something like a gleam of recollection kindled up in his eyes, and wheeling upon his right foot, just at the moment he was in line with Lacy's servant, he took him in flank with a volley to the following effect: "On my honour, I believe you are Willy Newton! Come, come, Mr. Newton, that is not fair, to pass an old friend in that sort of way. 'Pon my honour, if I had not got you just in flank, and looked along the line just to see how your features dressed, like, I should not have known you! And you to go and pass me, with whom you have played at skittles, and howls, and all manner of things a thousand times! That's not fair at all!"

"I did not know you might like my acquaintance," replied Newton. "You are Adjutant Green, and I am only Captain Lacy's gentleman. That makes a difference, you know."

"Not a whit," cried Green, catching at the beloved word gentleman, "not a whit. If you're a gentleman, as I take you to be, behave as such, and act accordingly. Do you suppose that I am one of those who forget old friends when they happen to be a little up in the world? No, no, Mr. Newton! Those who do so deserve to go down again in the world—so say I—and you and I knew each other when we were boys, like. But I thought you had gone into the army too after the old gentleman's death. The young fellow—who is an old fellow now by the way—promised he'd do mighty great things for us both: and I must say he kept his word with me, for whenever I did anything worth noticing, like, I had nothing to do but to write to him, and there was sure to come some step or another."

"He never did anything for me in his life," answered Newton; "and I'll tell you more, Mr. Green, I never asked him, for I do not like him—I don't say much, but I don't like him—do you understand? I did go into the army sure enough; and he used to inquire about me, and promise me great things if I distinguished myself; but he never did anything, though he and the lawyer got me to enlist by telling me that all his interest lay in the army—so when I found that, I never answered the lawyer's letters; and then I was reported killed at Busaco, though I was but severely wounded; but I held my tongue, for I had no one to care about me; and then Captain Lacy

chose me for his servant, and I'm very well off—but I don't like that fellow we were just talking about—I would not have anything from him for a great deal: but I don't want it, thank God. I am very well off now-a-days."

"But what makes you think so ill of him?" demanded Green. "I'm sharp enough in general, and I never saw any harm in the man. Other folks used to say he was miserly-like and avaricious, but he gave me fifty guineas to start me like a gentleman."

"Why what made him so keen then to get you and I to go into the army?" demanded Newton; "he never rested, nor the lawyer either, till we had touched the king's gold, and were off for India. What made him do that, think you, Mr. Green?"

"Why, he told me," replied Green, "that it was all because his interest lay that way, and because he could do more for me there than anywhere else; and so he has."

"But I do not well see why he should care so much about us," replied Newton; "why should he care for us more than for the other servants of his grandfather? You had only been what they called steward's clerk for a year, and though I had been longer in the family, I was but a boy. There was something under it, Mister Green, and if you will come in and take a glass of wine, I will tell you something that puzzles me—that is to say, if you are not too proud."

"Proud! What have I to be proud of?" rejoined the soldier; "so I'll come in with all my heart, for I was just going to ask him to do something to get Louisa, my niecc, into a family; but if he's a rascal, I would rather hear it first, for then I won't go."

"You may save yourself the trouble of going to look for him," answered Newton, "for he is not in town, I can tell you; and as for your niece, you had better speak to Captain Lacy about her. Get him to talk to his cousin, Lady Mary,—to whom folks say he's going to be married, but I say not,—get him to speak to her, and the business will be done in a twinkling."

"Thank you, thank you!" answered the other, "the captain offered just now, but I thought, he's so young, you see; and yet he's quite a gentleman, I know; but I will speak to him again, for I am sure one may trust him anyhow."

"You may!" answered the servant; and thus having

shown that Lacy was a hero even to his valet-de-chambre, we shall leave the two to find their way in through the door of Lord Methwyn's house, which the porter,—who with the true dignified pride of servants did not choose to wait upon his fellows,—had left ajar, in order to resume his own place in his proud leathern chair, and read in the newspaper the events and opinions of the day.

CHAPTER XII.

LET us now turn to the third day after Colonel Adair had received the tidings of his appointment; premising, that during the interval, both he himself and Lacy had accomplished a great many of those preparatory pieces of business which seem so interminable and insurmountable when contemplated from the beginning; but which are, in fact, so soon dispatched when we set about them with real good will. Lacy had bought his horses and arranged his baggage, and settled his accounts with his agents, and had remodelled his will, and waited on the Commander-in-chief, and done a great many other things, all very proper to be done, but unnecessary to be mentioned; and Colonel Adair, with all his old habits coming to his aid, had accomplished far more than he had expected. There was one thing however which embarrassed him; and which, turn it which way he would, consider it in every light he could think of, look at it under all points of view, he could not arrange to his satisfaction. That point was, what he was to do with his daughter while he himself was on the continent;—for be it remarked, by this time it was determined and very well understood, that Napoleon was to be met in the outset of his new career; and even the particular spot of earth on which the great approaching struggle was to take place, was easily divined by every officer of experience. Far be it from me to say that any man,—or if there was any man, it was but one,—knew that on the precise field of Waterloo must be fought the battle between ambition and mankind; but every one of any knowledge in the art of war clearly foresaw, that the Rhine, the Ocean, and probably the Meuse, would limit the struggle which was to decide the fate of Europe. Colonel Adair, as a good and scientific officer, was in no doubt as to this point; and as he felt no doubt either of the success of the British arms, he more than once thought of taking his daughter with him to Belgium, where the king of France still remained, and of leaving her at Ghent or Bruges, while he was in the field. The difficulties and dangers of her orphan state however, the vague indistinct

perception of painful chances in a foreign land, the loneliness of her hours, and the anxieties of her heart, while he was absent, made him pause: and often, full often in the course of the succeeding days, would he gaze at her as she sat at work beside him, with a look of painful love, full of doubts, and apprehensions, and embarrassments.

One day, however, after he had been absent during the greater part of the morning, he returned with an air of satisfaction, and told Helen, that he had been calling upon their worthy friend Williamson. "He is a kind, good fellow!" added Colonel Adair; "though his birth and early education render him of course a little rough and perhaps vulgar. He offered me his purse and his services as far as they would go in my new expedition; but, thank God, Helen, as matters stand at present, we want neither the one nor the other; though I know few men whose assistance I would more willingly accept;—except indeed Lacy's; for about him there is that gentlemanly tone of mind and feeling, that of all men on earth, he is the one to whom I would most willingly pay the compliment of being under an obligation. But to return, my dear child. Williamson has in some degree relieved my mind about you.—I was anxious for your comfort during my absence, Helen; but he has charged me in his own and his wife's name, to give you an invitation to their place at Marsmore during the whole period which duty will detain me abroad."

Helen changed colour, and the tears almost rose in her eyes as she exclaimed, "Oh, my dear father, I hope you have not accepted this invitation! Indeed, indeed, I cannot!"

"But what is your objection, my dear child?" demanded her father; "you know that his wife, who is a good motherly kind of woman enough, will be very glad to see you, and his daughters also; and you have too much dignity of heart, my dear Helen, to mind the little airs of assumption which they give themselves."

"Oh, it is not that, papa," replied Helen, "though that is not pleasant; but I hoped and expected that I was to go with you, especially if the army went to Flanders."

"My dear child, I am afraid you have not calculated at all on the inconveniences and discomforts of the course you wish to pursue," replied her father. "I have not, it is true, accepted Williamson's offer; telling him that it was yourself who must decide; but before you ask me to take you with me, remember that it can be but for a

very small part of the way. I must then leave you alone in a foreign town; and perhaps during the whole of the rest of the war, may see as little of you as if you were in England. Besides, my dear girl, suppose, only suppose,—that we were defeated, what would become of you? and what an additional weight it would be upon my mind, to know that you were in a country overrun by the enemy.”

Helen looked sadly down upon the ground for a moment or two, and then raising her eyes with a look such as only can pass between a daughter and her father, she answered, “Well, indeed, my dear father, I will never ask you to do anything for me that may be an additional weight upon your mind, burdened as it already is. But indeed I cannot go to the Williamsons’;” and her cheek glowed a good deal as she spoke. “Have you not observed,” she continued, “that that young man, John Williamson, always puts on a particular manner towards me, which is very disagreeable?”

“But where could I place you, Helen, while I am away?” demanded her father; “and besides, he too will of course be absent with his regiment.”

“Better take me with you than place me there, indeed, my dear father,” replied Helen; “for though he might as you say be absent, yet I could not go there without giving encouragement to views I am afraid he entertains. Indeed, you had better take me with you.”

Colonel Adair mused; but ere he could reply, the maid announced Lady Mary Denham.

Colonel Adair said, after the first salutation was over, “Here is Helen, Lady Mary, endeavouring to persuade me to do the thing of all others I long to do, at the expense of reason and prudence, namely, to take her with me to the wars—as far at least as I may be permitted to do so.”

“Utterly impossible, colonel, that you can take her! My dear Helen, do not think of such a thing!” Helen looked mortified, and Lady Mary continued; “I tell you, my dear cousin, it is impossible—as much impossible as it is to be in two places at the same time; simply because I have determined positively that you shall spend the whole period of your father’s absence with me, whether you will or not; and whatever I have determined always comes to pass, so make up your mind to the disappointment.”

The sun shone out on Colonel Adair’s high forehead, for though he would no more have done an act of rudeness

to Mr. Williamson than to any one else, yet he knew that from what had passed between them in regard to the son of that personage, he had a very sufficient excuse for preferring the dwelling of Lady Mary Denham to Marsmore, as a residence for his daughter; and that, too, without hurting in any degree the pride of the inviter, or appearing to court the lady of rank, and slight the attorney.

Helen, however, who remained in blessed ignorance of Mr. Williamson's formal proposal, felt the matter more difficult, and consequently replied with a wistful but somewhat sorrowful look, (expressing fully what was going on in her heart, namely, the desire to accept Lady Mary's invitation, but the fear of being obliged to decline it,) "I am afraid my father has already received another invitation for me if I do not go with him."

"If your father has accepted any invitation from a more distant relation than myself," said Lady Mary, "I shall not only be very much affronted, but shall annul it by my prerogative royal; and, if it be from a relation as near or nearer, I shall claim my share or proportion of your time as a matter of right, and, putting in my title to be first served, will take possession of you at once. Then let any one get you from me if they can, my dear Helen. So, Colonel Adair, I beg you to be reasonable, for I am determined to be unreasonable; and if one of the party do not keep fast their common sense, we shall never come to the end of the matter."

"I have accepted no invitation for Helen as yet, my dear young lady," replied Colonel Adair, with a smile, and laying some emphasis upon the word accepted; "I have only received one, and I am happy to say that there are many valid excuses to be assigned for declining it, which can give no offence. She is quite free therefore to accept that which you are so kind as to make her, if she do not adhere to her wish of accompanying me, which I trust her good sense will prevent her from doing."

Helen looked at Lady Mary, and then at her father, from whom she could remember no separation, though he had, of course, been absent during a great part of her infancy. "Lady Mary will, I am sure, forgive me," she said, "if I confess, my dear father, that I would rather be with you wherever you are, than anywhere else in all the world; but you have told me that it would only be an additional weight upon your mind, that I must be separated from you during the greater part of the campaign, if not

altogether, and you appeal to good sense. Thus then, my dear father, I will leave it to you to decide for me, knowing my feelings as you know them, and the circumstances by which we are surrounded far better than I can do."

"Well then, my dear Lady Mary," said Colonel Adair, "frankly and thankfully I accept your invitation for my dear child. I see and understand your kind and generous feelings towards her, and the blessing of a father who leaves her with comparative happiness in your society, will not, I am sure, be less valuable to Lady Mary Denham, because that father is neither rich nor powerful."

The tears came up into Lady Mary's eyes as she returned the pressure of Colonel Adair's hand; and then turning to Helen, who was weeping too, she kissed her cheek to hide a drop or two that began to run down her own. "Well then, my dear Helen," she said, "you are my own till your father comes back again at least. Is it not so?"

"Yes, if you wish it," replied Helen, drying her tears, "and I can assure you, Lady Mary, that during that time I would rather be with you than with any one else."

"Indeed, Helen!" said Lady Mary, looking into her eyes with a smile which made the rosy blood mount rapidly into Helen's cheeks, "indeed! then I am flattered! But, my dear colonel, I shall not be satisfied unless I can persuade you to come down before you set out, and spend a day or two with me at a little place I have in Sussex, just to settle Helen in her new abode, where we shall live like widows till you return again. I expect a very few old friends of my poor father's to be with me, and amongst them perhaps you may find some old friends of your own—at least so my Aunt Pontypool thinks—it is not far from the sea, and not near so far from the port where you must embark, as London. So I will take no refusal."

"Indeed I cannot promise," replied Colonel Adair, "it must entirely depend upon circumstances. The Commander-in-chief has most kindly given me some time ere I join, in consideration of all that I have to do, in consequence of having been so long on half-pay; but at his last levée he intimated to me that it was necessary to make my preparations with all speed, as he could not extend my leave without inconvenience to the service. I have already got through a great deal in a short time; and if the rest goes as smoothly, I may have two or three days to spare, but I would fain be with the regiment a short time before

the period specified, both to show my gratitude for the favours held out, and to set the other officers and soldiers an example of that alacrity and activity which I shall expect, and which the service requires."

"Well, we shall see," replied Lady Mary: "and now having walked here for this express purpose, I must walk back again, satisfied with the victories I have just gained, and not risking my success by farther rashness; is not that good generalship, Colonel Adair? Oh, Helen, I forgot to tell you, I have got the nicest little maid for you in the world. Her name is Louisa Green, and I am sure she will give you satisfaction, for she is in love with my cousin Charles Lacy, and in fact is his choice and recommendation." Helen blushed again and again, and Lady Mary went on. "But to be serious. She herself and her whole family were saved by Charles from misery and distress—for I am sure you know that he is the most generous and kind-hearted of human beings."

"I am sure he is," said Colonel Adair. "I am sure he is," echoed Helen in her heart, but it did not reach her lips.

"And besides being generous and kind-hearted," Lady Mary proceeded, "he is careful and prudent, and knows a good deal of the world. So after having saved this poor family from actual starvation, he found out that their nearest relation was a very gallant soldier, who distinguished himself so much in the Peninsula, that he was raised from the ranks. They had been all formerly in a better station of life; and as the uncle, though he could do a great deal for them, could not support them all, it was determined to seek a place as lady's maid for the girl, who has had a good education. Lacy applied to me, and as I had a maid of my own, I took the poor girl to do nothing or anything as it happened—and oh, Helen! if you could but hear her talk about Charles's coming in on that opera night, and sending for a surgeon for her mother, and giving them all food, and life—oh, Helen, Helen!"

CHAPTER XIII.

A BEAUTIFUL day, lighting up tower and town, and hill and dale, had set in, completely changing the aspect of all the world by the magical effect of light; but to Colonel Adair and his daughter Helen, as they rolled down towards Alton, one of the country seats possessed by Lady Mary Denham, there was wanting that other kind of light, that light of the heart, the sunshine of happiness, without which the loveliest day is as dark and gloomy, as cold, and leaden, and lifeless as the world without the presence of the sun.

No one could enjoy the aspect of nature, no one could rejoice in the glorious works of God, beaming in the effulgence of his crowning gift, with more ardour than Helen Adair; but it was that in her bosom a feeling of melancholy and apprehension—the continual presence of consciousness of coming grief, mingled with all, and tinged the whole with sadness.

The space of three days was all that remained of the time which Colonel Adair had allotted to his own preparations, ere he took the command of his regiment. The leave granted to him by the Commander-in-chief, indeed, was not yet expired; but he had explained to Helen the motives under which he acted, in voluntarily abridging his stay, and she knew him too well to suppose that it would be protracted. At length the day of their journey drew towards a close, the last stages had seemed long, and the horses had appeared to go more slowly.

"I wonder if it is much farther," said Helen, towards six o'clock; "I do not know why, but I am more tired than usual."

"It cannot be much farther," Colonel Adair replied, "for we have just passed the seventieth milestone, and it is only at the distance of seventy-two from London."

"Is that Alton?" demanded Colonel Adair, speaking to the postilion out of the window, and pointing to the house.

"Yes, sir!" replied the man, cracking his whip and driving on.

The carriage rolled on, the gates of the park were thrown open by a little old woman from the lodge; and following the sinuosities of the road, as it wound in and out through large masses of fine old timber trees, they reached in about ten minutes the esplanade before the house. Two or three servants were out in a moment to open the doors and receive the guests; and from the butler, who of course took the lead, Colonel Adair learned that Lady Mary and her guests were dressing for dinner, but that he and his daughter had been expected even the day before, so that apartments were prepared for them. To these apartments they were now led; and Helen, in those destined to herself, with the pleasant augury of future kindness, which very slight tokens of mindfulness afford more surely than loud professions, perceived a thousand little cares which Mary Denham herself had bestowed to render her abode comfortable and pleasant.

According to her father's desire—for with her own inclination she would not have come down till after dinner—she hastened to dress herself; but the first thing she beheld in the dressing-room were a number of water-colour paintings of the scenes in which she herself had passed all her early years, hung round upon the walls. Till she looked at the names which were written beneath each, and saw “—The seat of Lord Methwyn,” “—The park of Lord Methwyn,” she forgot the connection between Lady Mary and the family to whom all that part of the country belonged; but as she examined them again she perceived, from the marks on the wall, that other pictures of a larger size had been lately removed to make room for these, and with a sudden apprehension, gathered from that fact, lest Lady Mary should have seen into the secret feelings of her heart, the blood mounted quickly up into her cheek, and she put her hands before her face as if some one had been present to remark the passing emotion. The next moment the sounds of an opening door and a light step in the adjoining room made her turn. The visitor was Lady Mary herself, half dressed, and Helen hastily quitted the pictures to meet her, though be it remarked that the blush we have noticed was still upon her cheek, and perhaps a little heightened by seeing that her friend perceived how her attention had been occupied. She was soon relieved, however, for after the first kind words of reception, Lady Mary pointed to the pictures, asking, “Are they not prettily done? They are by my Aunt Pontypool, painted

several years ago, and I thought it would please you to have in your dressing-room views of the place where you lived so long, rather than the series of fine and very picturesque prints of public buildings in India, which before occupied their places. But now, Helen, dear, make haste with your toilet, and I will be back with you in five minutes, so that we can go down together, for we have collected a large party, thanks to the chaperonage of my Aunt Pontypool, without whom I should be obliged to live in solitary grandeur, like a raven of a hundred years old, in a tree still older, and should not dare invite one young man to the house for fear of my reputation."

Helen did make haste, but she was still not quite ready when Lady Mary returned. There was not much to be done, however, and in that little her fair cousin assisted her herself.

"I would neither send you my own maid, Helen," said Mary Denham, "nor the little maid you are to have all to yourself, because my own is pomposity itself, and would rather delay than assist any one who did not know her ways, and the little Louisa is as much astray in this great house as you could be: but let me do that for you;" and she was in the act of fastening her cousin's dress with her own fair hands when her maid came in to bring her a pocket-handkerchief.

"Lord, my lady!" she exclaimed, as she detected her, "do not do such a thing as that; let me finish Miss Adair's dress. Would you not like the back hair a little more raised, madam? and I think if the front were somewhat more dégagée it would be better."

Helen, however, thanked her, and declined, as she was keeping Lady Mary, and the dinner hour was already long past; and putting her arm through that of her noble cousin as soon as all that was declared indispensable was accomplished she proceeded to the drawing-room, which was but half-lighted by the twilight of spring, and the embers of what had been a large wood fire.

There were already twelve or fourteen people in the room, and as Lady Pontypool had audibly wondered twenty times what could have become of her niece, and had then "daresayed" that she was with her cousin, Miss Adair, giving all persons plainly to understand that dinner waited for those two persons only, every eye was turned upon the door by which the ladies entered. Had they been able to see them, certain it is that very seldom could

they have beheld two lovelier girls; and indeed the faint light in the room was still sufficient to show that beautiful outline of face and figure, and that air of distinction and grace, which each eminently possessed, and without which it is useless trying to be a lady. Colonel Adair had been down some time, and he was engaged in speaking busily, near one of the windows, with a gentleman, whose appearance as he stood—though she could not see his face—made Helen's heart thrill with emotions which the sight of none but one person on earth could occasion. The next moment, however, he turned, and leaving Colonel Adair, Lacy advanced direct to his cousin and Miss Adair.

"Enchanted to see you, Charles," said Lady Mary, giving him her hand with that free and unembarrassed air of calm satisfaction, which might well convince any one but good Lady Pontypool, that notwithstanding the ties of regard, esteem, nay even admiration, there were between the hearts of the cousins none of those chords which thrill upon the slightest touch, or, like those of the *Æolian* harp, vibrate sweet harmonies to the lightest breath of air. Helen's manner was, perhaps, more embarrassed; for surprise was added to other feelings. Lacy had called upon her father on the preceding evening, and she had had no idea that the same journey then lay before him which she was about to take. He shook hands with her warmly, however, and, as the twilight favoured, perhaps held her hand in his own for an instant longer than necessary, with a nearer pressure than that with which he would have touched the hand of any other person. Lady Mary Denham gave Lacy time to shake hands with Helen, and smiled kindly and meaningly upon him as she did so; but the next moment she inquired, "When did you arrive? I did not expect you till to-morrow."

"We arrived five minutes ago," replied Lacy, "but you know I dress quickly, and therefore was down sooner than the rest, and sooner than yourself, my fair cousin."

"We! we!" cried Lady Mary; "why, Charles, who, in the name of fortune, have you brought with you? We! we! are you an army?"

"No, not quite! I have only brought two personages," replied Lacy, "for whom I have made the butler hunt out rooms, though I find that your inn is very full, Mary. I have taken possession of the blue room on the left, with its appurtenances, for my right honourable father, and

have chosen one of the bachelors' rooms at the end of the other wing for my honourable friend, Major Kennedy."

"Well, Charles, you certainly do take the greatest liberties with me that ever I endured!" exclaimed Lady Mary, laughing, while at the last name a degree of red came over her cheek, which she thanked the dim light for hiding, "but I must put up with your impertinence, thanking Heaven it is but for a short time;" and she moved on, still keeping Helen's arm in her own, to welcome her other guests, several of whom were dinner visitors from the mansions round. She had scarcely greeted all, however, when the drawing-room door again opened, giving entrance to Lord Methwyn, followed close by Major Kennedy.

Taking a liberty with Lady Mary's cheek, which he always did towards any of his female relations who were young and handsome, Lord Methwyn saluted her with a kiss, calling her his dear child in a truly parental tone, and then passed on to speak to others in the room with whom he was acquainted, leaving sufficient bustle, in what sailors would call his wake, to allow Lady Mary to greet Major Kennedy, with not many eyes resting on them. They said but a few words to each other, but they were said in such a tone and manner, that Helen's breath for a moment came thick with a new discovery, and she was instinctively about to withdraw her arm and leave Lady Mary, when the latter turned, saying, "Why, Helen, I must obtain your acquaintance for my uncle. I forgot you had never seen him.—Lord Methwyn—my sweet uncle, will you listen to me?—Lord Methwyn——"

At that very moment Lacy was engaged in saying, "Lord Methwyn! Colonel Adair!" and Colonel Adair was drawing himself up into such a line, that another straight line might have been projected parallel to it to all eternity, without touching it in any point. At Lady Mary's call, however, the peer turned and crossed over to her, and Mary proceeded, "Let me make you acquainted with my cousin, Miss Adair."

Lord Methwyn immediately said and did what was gentlemanly, and was proceeding with perfect ease to talk about London and the weather, and other small and great things, when the doors between that room and the next were thrown open, and a blaze of light rushed in, sufficient to have announced, without other explanation, that

"dinner was on the table." The magic words, however, were pronounced at full, and the party proceeded to perform that most difficult and unpleasant manœuvre, of sorting themselves into pairs to get into the dining-room. The young lady of the mansion did, indeed, take care to arrange the ceremony, as far as it concerned those in regard to whose position she was at all anxious, saying to her uncle, "You stand by me, my lord, on this occasion."

"I will always stand by you, my fair niece, and never require a better situation," replied the peer, with a smile.

"Colonel Adair, will you take my Aunt Pontypool—Charles, Miss Adair—Major Kennedy, Lady Susan Oatstraw," continued Lady Mary; and thus looking round the room, and making various signs to direct people who were in doubt, towards their proper partners for the moment, she followed Lord Methwyn to the dining-room. There Lady Mary put in practice but one stratagem, which consisted of the words, "Lady Susan Oatstraw, will you not come near me?" Lady Susan and Major Kennedy accordingly moved up, and the rest of the guests seating themselves as best they might, the meal began.

The commencement of almost all things, even of dinner, is solemn; but under the progress of good viands through the lips, and the influence of good wine upon the brain, the solemnity wears off, and gayer and kindlier feelings arise in the bosom of every sarcophagous creature towards his fellow shark. Lord Methwyn looked at Colonel Adair, and thought him one of the most gentlemanly men he had ever met, and Colonel Adair looked at Lord Methwyn, and thought that he had seldom seen a face which bore less the expression of a tyrannical landlord, or grasping, avaricious man. Then Lord Methwyn's eyes turned upon Helen Adair, and he certainly pronounced her the very prettiest little girl that he had ever beheld, and he might perhaps think, that if he were but twenty years younger, and if widowerism were not such a comfortable thing, and if all his habits were not quite so fixed, and a great many more ifs negative, he might be tempted to make another Lady Methwyn, for the consolation of his old age. But, then again, as the ifs predominated, he turned to tell Mary how he had surprised Charles the night before, when on hearing that he (Charles) was going down to Alton, he had declared he would go with him. It was not, "Oh,

wonderful son, that can so astonish a mother!" he added, "but, oh, wonderful father, that can so astonish a son!"

By this time the words "Buonaparte" and "military movements" were beginning to circulate quickly at the bottom of the table, and that kind of conversation soon became general. A good many veteran officers were present, and for nearly half an hour nothing was talked of but the renewal of the war and the approaching campaign. But oh! how differently does everything appear when considered and spoken of at different times and under different circumstances! For several days before, it had been all that Helen Adair could do to keep her mind from dwelling on images of death, and desolation, and despair, connected with that very subject which was now under discussion; but at present, nothing was to be heard but expressions of joy, and satisfaction, and confidence. Not a doubt, not a fear, not a regret seemed to mingle with the anticipations of any of the party; and nothing was thought of but the glory of the British arms, the overthrow of the mighty tyrant, and the re-establishment of permanent peace and tranquillity, brought about by victory and success.

The first mention of the subject was in itself painful to Helen Adair. As dinner went on, other causes of uneasiness, which had affected her at its commencement, were removed. The presence of Lord Methwyn had been no small matter of apprehension to her: for, knowing her father's frank and decided nature, and judging of the peer solely by what had occurred in regard to the farm which Colonel Adair had held, she feared that every moment something might take place which would bring the two into unpleasant contact with each other: nor was this fear decreased by seeing Lacy's eyes often directed, with a somewhat inquiring look, to that part of the table at which his father and hers sat nearly opposite to each other; but, as the moments proceeded, and nothing disagreeable occurred, Lacy grew evidently more at ease, and Helen, who by Lady Mary's arrangement was placed beside him, lost great part of her uneasiness. Between the first and second courses, however, those alarms were entirely removed, for Lord Methwyn, with urbanity which none knew better how to display than himself, after speaking a few desultory words with Colonel Adair upon the affairs of the day, concluded by asking him to take wine, which was accepted, without any appearance of ill-will.

Thus passed the hours of dinner till the ladies withdrew; and, though Lacy was too much a gentleman to make love at dinner, or to render his behaviour to Helen at all remarkable to others, yet she rose from the table, knowing, from every word that he had addressed to her, and from every tone in which those words were conveyed, that the whole heart of Charles Lacy was hers, and hers solely; and unmixed and purely happy was the feeling which that conviction produced, for in this case she confided entirely to him, and resolved not to examine any obstacles, difficulties, or dangers which might lie in the way, till he himself should point them out to her. She loved him—that had long been decided, and he loved her; and as their fate was so far irrevocable, she thought there would be little use in seeking to contemplate obstacles which she could not clearly distinguish, nor aid to overcome.

After Lady Mary had risen, and the male part of the party were left alone, the conversation was even more easy and calm than it had been before. Lord Methwyn led, and did so with such gentlemanly bearing, and such cheerful good-humour, that even Colonel Adair—who, too well bred to mark his dislike by anything beyond cold distance of manner, was certainly not disposed to like the peer—could not help smiling and taking his tone of mind, for the moment, from the infectious cheerfulness of Lacy's father.

Most persons present, except one or two of the old school of fox-hunting hard drinkers, were inclined to rise early from the table; and Lord Methwyn, overlooking the part of the board at which the bottle was still agitated, somewhat rapidly observed, "Well, gentlemen, as we are none of us taking any more wine, we had better seek the drawing-room;" and, rising, he was immediately followed by so strong a majority, that the recusants were obliged to yield and obey. Being in his niece's house, the peer made way for the rest to precede him; but, as he perceived Colonel Adair about to pass, he laid his hand for an instant on his arm, saying, "Colonel, I wish to speak with you for a single moment; we will join you directly, Charles;" and, on this hint, Lacy was, of course, obliged to leave the room.

"Colonel Adair!" said Lord Methwyn, as soon as they were alone, "when I was speaking with my son last night upon his approaching visit to this place, he told me that you were expected here, which instantly determined me to accompany him."

"You did me too much honour, my lord," replied Colonel Adair; "what may be your commands?"

"Commands I have none!" replied Lord Methwyn, smiling; "I leave that to you, my dear sir, since I have been long out of command; but my object was to ascertain precisely what view my agent, Mr. Williamson, had given you of my conduct in some late transactions, inasmuch as when I conveyed a message to you through my son—not having the pleasure of your personal acquaintance—you replied that Mr. Williamson had satisfied you that he had acted entirely by my directions."

"I did make that reply, my lord," replied Colonel Adair; "but the subject is not a pleasant one to me,—may I hope that it is nearly exhausted?"

"Not yet," replied Lord Methwyn. "I am the most opposed to Pyrronism that it is possible to conceive. I hate all doubts, and therefore always have them cleared away. The subject is a disagreeable one; but still, allow me to say, that I gave no particular directions to my agent and attorney. I only gave general orders, and though I have no copy of the letter, my words were to the following effect: that he should take such measures as would insure the payment of the rent ultimately, if not immediately; but to do nothing that could be construed into harsh or ungentlemanly conduct. Has such been his representation to you?"

"No, my lord, it has not," replied Colonel Adair; "he gave me to understand that your orders were strict and imperative, and he has since afforded me the strongest proof that his own wishes and purposes towards me were the most kind and liberal that man can entertain towards another. You must reconcile the discrepancy yourself."

"I shall not attempt to reconcile it, my dear sir," replied Lord Methwyn; "what is his object I do not know: but the fellow is certainly that sort of animal which in the vulgar tongue is termed a rascal, and as one does not fight one's attorney when he calumniates one, I shall first unmask him, and then turn him off. My letter to him I cannot show you, though he can, and you have my full permission to ask it; but his letter to me which drew forth that answer I can show you, and under present circumstances hold myself justified in doing so. There it is, my dear sir! read it, and then I must leave you to reconcile the discrepancy between this person's words and his actions."

Colonel Adair took the letter which Lord Methwyn had drawn from his pocket, and now handed to him ; and advancing towards the light, he read it attentively through, with his brow growing dark as he went on. His comment, however, was short. He gave it back to the peer, merely saying, "He is a rascal. My lord, I have done you injustice, and I beg your pardon."

"It is of no consequence, Colonel Adair," replied Lord Methwyn, shaking the hand he held out to him ; "I was desirous of showing you, that before I was at all aware of your connection with so near a relation of my own as Lady Mary Denham, I had not acted towards you as you had been led to conceive ; and now let us both forget all that is unpleasant in the past, and join the ladies in the next room."

Thus saying, the peer opened the door into the drawing-room ; Colonel Adair followed, and they mingled with the various groups into which the party had now separated. Helen, who had been gazing from one of the windows upon the moonlight which was sleeping upon the park without, and contrasting strangely with the factitious lights of the tapers within, turned her glance, as she heard the drawing-room door open, towards the face of her father ; but all was clear good-humour, and Lord Methwyn on his part advanced, and leaning his back against the wood-work of the window-frame, began to speak with her in a gay and kindly tone. There were feelings at Helen's heart that rather embarrassed her, and as she replied, and endeavoured to do her best to please the father of Charles Lacy, the colour came and went in her warm cheek in a way that the peer thought very beautiful indeed. Her face was still turned towards the window, so that Lord Methwyn had all the advantage of catching its expression alone : but in a moment or two a look of fear came over it, and a half-suppressed scream broke involuntarily from her lips. Lord Methwyn turned suddenly round to discover what had caused her alarm ; but ere he could see anything, or Helen could explain that a man had come up close, and gazed in at the window, Lacy, who had been sitting at the other end of the room, talking with Lady Susan Oatstraw, darted across, threw open the glass door, and ran out into the park.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE common people of the skies (as Sir Henry Wootton calls them) were all diminished to small specks of faint light, especially towards the zenith, not far from which the glorious moon was rolling on in floods of brightness, at her highest noon. The whole world below was lying in calm tranquillity, and the air itself seemed sleeping, or, if it stirred at all, it was with the soft and tiptoe pace of some gentle ministering angel, afraid to disturb the repose of the children of earth around. In lines of taint and fainter gray stretched out the distant prospect, with the little country town upon its hills, rising up in deeper shadow between; while the old broad woods, sweeping up towards the house at each of its angles, and leaving long lawns and vistas open to the eye on three sides, presented in themselves nothing but dark and indistinct masses.

Such was the scene which opened before the eyes of Charles Lacy, as he threw aside the glass door of the drawing-room, and darted out upon the lawn. He instantly turned towards the left, however, and there, as he expected, caught a glance of a receding figure hastening towards that part of the wood which approached the eastern angle of the house. Lacy, though he had no means of defence, except those wherewithal nature had furnished him, did not for a moment pause to seek any, but pursued like lightning, and in two minutes reached the wood which the figure he had seen just entered before him. Fine dry Kensington gravel, as the learned reader knows, has great powers of reverberation, and, for an instant, pausing on the turf, Lacy heard the steps of the fugitive running on before him. By that sound he followed, and being very swift of foot he was evidently gaining on the other, who was apparently making for one of the side doors in the park wall. Lacy, who knew every inch of the grounds, where he had often played in his boyish days, hurried on, convinced that, at the pace they mutually kept up, he could overtake the intruder long before he reached the point of escape in that direction;

but suddenly the other turned into one of the wider and straighter walks, and Lacy following caught a sight of him within the distance of fifty paces. At the end of two hundred yards more the walk ended at the wall, and feeling sure that, stopped by that barrier and the thick underwood on either side, the stranger must come within his reach, as there were no lateral paths between the spot where they stood and the wall, Lacy somewhat slackened his pace, though he still took care that the distance between himself and the person he was pursuing should not be increased, if it were not diminished. Thus they proceeded, till the stranger reached the wall, and Lacy expected to see him turn disappointed at not finding a means of escape by some other path, to the right or left. What was his surprise, then, to behold him set his foot upon something which was concealed by the shadow of the wall, and thus reaching a point half way up, vault over the other half, into the road beyond! Stung with his disappointment, Lacy darted forward, and taking advantage of the rolling-stone which had served the other for a step to climb the wall, he also leapt over into the road, and gazed after the fugitive. The first glance, however, showed him at once that further pursuit was vain, but at the same time gave him a hope of ascertaining who it was that had thus impudently entered the grounds of his cousin; for the stranger was in the very act of mounting a stout gray horse, which was held by a countryman, at the distance of about forty yards.

The stranger was in the saddle in a minute, though haste and alarm prevented him from gaining his right stirrup as easily as he might otherwise have done; but, not heeding that embarrassment, he put the horse into a trot, a canter, and a gallop, and, before Lacy could come to the spot where the countryman stood, was far up the side of the hill.

"Who is that, sir?" demanded Lacy, catching the horse-holder by the collar, as he was in the act of punching some pieces of money he had just received; "who is that?—I insist upon your informing me directly."

"Lord love your honour!" replied the man, in a quiet drawly tone of boorish dulness, "Lord love your honour! I cawnt saye; I doan't know the gentleman, not I. He comes up to me, just as I was a coming hoame, and offered to give me five shillings if I would hoald his 'orse here for an hour, or so, maybe. So, says I, why five shillings

is good wages for a day's woark, and better still for an hour or so; therefore I'll take your honour's offer, d'ye see."

"Come, come, my man," said Lacy, "such a story will not do for me; I am Captain Lacy, Lady Mary Denham's cousin, and if you do not instantly tell me all you know about this business, I will have up the gamekeepers and give you in charge, for aiding and abetting in breaking into the preserves, and poaching."

"Doan't ye, doan't ye, your honour, captain! doan't ye do that," cried the man, terrified at the very thought of the severe laws then in force in regard to poaching; "I am a poor honest man, I can assure your honour: and as for that gentleman, I never set eyes on him before this blessed afternoon, as I am a living man, your honour; and, Lord bless your honour, too, he was after no poaching of that sort loike; why, he seemed a soldier gentleman, loike yourself, and had got on a military coat; and, love ye, sir, he said that he was only up to a bit o' fun, going to look arter one o' the girls up at the house loike, as we've all don when we were young, and whoy not?"

"What girls do you mean?" demanded Lacy, sharply; "impudent scoundrel! what girls did he mean?"

"Why, only just the mayds loike, your honour," replied the man: "he did not tell me which o' them, and I didn't axe no questions, your honour; but I shouldn't wonder if it was little Betty, the laundry-mayde, who's as tight a little wench as any in the country, though it's all guess-work, your honour; for, Lord love ye, he never said a word, only as how he was going to look arter one of the girls."

"Well, if ever you see him again," replied Lacy, "tell him that Captain Lacy says he is an impudent scoundrel, and that if he discovers him, he will horsewhip him as long as he can stand over him; and now, my friend, tell me your name and where you live."

The man obeyed, giving his name and address as one of the farm-servants in a little hamlet just below the park, and Lacy, loosing the tight grasp he had got of his collar, let him go, and walked up the hill towards one of the great gates, the wall being too high to be climbed from the outside. As he passed a little rise, forming a sort of wave in the road, a considerable part of the highway, extending for about a mile, was laid open before his eyes, and upon it, nearly at the end, he caught a sight of a

post-chaise with four horses, apparently standing still, while a horseman who he never doubted was the identical person whom he had pursued through the park, was seen riding at full speed towards it. On reaching the side of the carriage he paused, apparently speaking to somebody within, and the next instant the whole cortège was in motion over the hill as fast as they could go. Lacy walked on, rang the bell at the gate, and asked the woman if anybody had passed towards the house.

"Nobody, sir," replied the woman, "since that gentleman I let in about an hour and a half ago."

"What gentleman?" demanded Lacy; "what was he like?"

"Why, I don't know his name, sir," she answered, "because I never saw him before, and I did not particularly remark what he was like either. He asked if my lady were not at the house to-night, and when I said yes, sauntered in, and up towards the house; but I'll tell you in a minute how you'll know which of the gentlemen up at the house is he, for he's got what they call a frock coat on, and spurs at the heels of his boots. He's a shortish young gentleman, too, and has light hair, I think, but I am not sure."

Lacy replied nothing, but walked on thoughtfully, and when he had reached a spot half way between the gate and the house he turned out of the way, and for a minute or two paced up and down, revolving what had occurred in his own mind, with no very pleasant feelings.

When Lacy made his appearance, all, except Helen Adair, at once began to ask him questions in regard to his chase and its result.

Lady Mary indeed said, "I dare say it was some one of the gardeners looking a little closer than necessary at the company."

"No, indeed," replied Lacy, "the scoundrel was evidently of a very different class. I wish I had but caught him."

"Well, let us hear," said Lady Mary, "who and what it was. On with your tale, beau cousin."

Helen looked at him anxiously, and with a very pale cheek; and Lacy went on to tell that he had followed the man through the park, till he reached the wall, where, making use of a rolling-stone to aid himself, he had sprung over the boundary; that he, Lacy, had followed his example, but only reached the high road in time to see him

mount a stout gray horse, and ride away. He then related his conversation with the woman at the gate, but refrained from mentioning the carriage and four which he had seen, or any other suspicion which he might entertain, but ended by declaring it very extraordinary.

In this all the party agreed, and many people declared that it was very provoking indeed that he had not been able to catch the intruder. Helen, however, looked very well satisfied that the matter had ended as it had done; the colour came back to her cheek, and the smile to her lips as soon as she found that Lacy had not been successful in his chase; and had others remarked her countenance as well as he did, they might have thought, as he thought, that her feelings upon the subject were as extraordinary as the event. Let it not be supposed, however, that Lacy felt angry at Helen's satisfaction, or doubtful as to her motives. Lacy was not at all that most wretched thing—a suspicious man; he saw that she was glad he had not overtaken the fugitive; he believed also that Helen, from the better glance that she had had of him, must have some reason for that gladness; and he wisely conceived that her motive might be one which she would not like to specify before so large a party of strangers as was then present, and consequently he forbore from asking her any questions which might be unpleasant to her to answer, or embarrassing to evade. He resolved, however, to seek some explanation from her at an after moment, and so full was his confidence in her candour and her affection, that he entertained not the slightest doubt of her answering his questions frankly and boldly. In the meantime he advised Lady Mary to be upon her guard. The person he had seen, he said, was evidently neither an ordinary poacher, nor any of that class of persons who might be expected to intrude into a park in so extraordinary a manner. He advised, therefore, that strict orders should be sent to the gamekeepers to take a reconnoissance of the park every evening, and also of the high roads near, and that direction should be given to the people at the lodges not to admit anybody on foot after dark, unless they were acquainted with his person. Lady Mary promised to follow these wise precautions to the letter. Lady Pontypool vowed that she was frightened out of her life, and if she had said out of her senses, no one would have denied it, for during the rest of

the evening she enacted many a curious mistake from mere nervousness. The rest of the company commented and wondered—the evening was rendered uncomfortable instead of agreeable—and thus passed the hours till carriages and bed-room candlesticks began to assemble, and “all the world to sleep were gone.”

In the merry, merry month of May, at which we have now arrived, we all know that fair Aurora begins to be an early riser from the couch of the bright god, and that standing half-way between summer and winter, she alternately weeps over the gone children of the year, and smiles upon those that are rising to her view. When she rose, then, at the early hour of five on the morning after the events we have just related, tears were in her bright eyes, and so continued for more than an hour and a half after her advent to the skies. About that time, Helen Adair, who was scarcely a later riser, and certainly little less fair and glowing a creature than herself, came down to the drawing-room of Alton Hall, not at all aware of the customs of Lady Mary's household, and not knowing at what time the important function of breakfasting was to take place. A housemaid, with a tin shovel, a duster, and a broom, was in the very act of quitting the drawing-room as she entered, and fancying from that sign that she was much too early in her movements for the rest of the family, she determined to go back to her own apartment, and only stayed to gaze out of the drawing-room windows for a minute or two, as they afforded a different view from those of her own room.

She had not thus remained more than five minutes, and the thoughts of the scenery were getting gradually mingled with the thoughts of returning to her own room, and of what she should do next, when, to her surprise—for she fancied herself the only person up except the servants—the form of Charles Lacy passed across before the window.

What the strange emotion is which sometimes induces us to run away from the very person whose society we love best, would perhaps be difficult to tell; but when Helen Adair found herself there alone, and saw that Lacy was approaching the glass door through which he had issued forth on the preceding night, and that they were likely to have each other's society for an hour or more in the very pleasantest way that it is possible to conceive, namely, with no one to remark, and no one to meddle, she

trembled like a condemned criminal, looked towards the other door, and certainly had there been time, and had Lacy not seen her and greeted her with a smile, she would have attempted to escape from an interview in which she anticipated nothing but happiness.

Lacy had seen her, however, and hastened to open the glass door and come into the drawing-room, where Helen still stood smiling and changing colour, in a way which showed plainly that she was agitated, and yet not displeased to see him. As he took her hand to give her the morning's greeting, he felt, by its trembling, how much she was agitated, and to say the truth, he was a little agitated too, for though he had determined to seek her out, in order to talk with her over the business of the preceding evening, he felt that his heart was just in such a state as to lead him on to say many things, which he knew that she would think it her duty to repeat to her father, unless he gave her full and sufficient reason for not doing so, which he feared there would be hardly time to accomplish.

Under these circumstances, the first words of their meeting were embarrassed enough. He asked her how she did, and hoped that the disturbance of the night before had not hurt her rest, and he called her throughout by no name at all, either christian or surname, for he was determined never to call her Miss Adair when they were alone, and he feared to call her Helen, lest, whether he would or not, his lips should put "dear" before it. Helen replied like a lady, but like an agitated one, and thus they remained standing at the window, where Lacy had found her, with both their hearts beating in a very ominous way.

At length Lacy began to think that all this was very foolish, and therefore he resolved to come to the matter of his inquiries. "It was a very extraordinary occurrence that of last night," he said; "will you let me ask you one question in regard to it? You must have had a better view of the person who was impertinent enough to look in at the window than I had; and yet I confess, from the mere glance I obtained, I could not but think that I had seen the face before. Will you tell me then, did it strike you as one that you know?"

Helen coloured and then turned pale, and for a moment or two she did not reply, but at length she said, "Oh, Captain Lacy, I wish you would not ask me that question."

"Indeed!" said Lacy, a slight cloud coming over his brow, as he did not comprehend the motives of her ob-

jection. "Indeed! Far be it from me to intrude into any secret."

Helen was agitated, but something like coldness in Lacy's tone gave her more command over herself; and with her cheek still pale, but the confidence of a clear heart in her countenance, she lifted her eyes to his face, and gazed at him for a moment with a slightly reproachful look, as if she would have asked, "Do you doubt me?" Lacy felt all which that look implied; his heart smote him; and taking the hand he had not long relinquished, he added, "Far, far be it from me, Helen, to ask you anything that you could wish to withhold."

Helen might have resisted reproach or doubt, but she could not resist tenderness and confidence. "Nay," she said, "I do not indeed wish to withhold anything from you, Captain Lacy, but——"

"Do not, do not call me Captain Lacy," he interrupted, warmly. "May I not have another name?"

"Well, then, Charles!" she continued, with a cheek blushing like scarlet, and her voice sinking almost to a whisper, as it pronounced that name—although, he it remembered, she was so much accustomed to hear him called so by the family of Dr. Bellingham, that it often came close to her lips when she least desired it. "Well, then, indeed, I have nothing to withhold from you, but I am not sure—I may think that I know the face, and yet be mistaken—I saw it but for a moment—and cannot believe it."

"But whose did you think it was then, Helen?" he demanded, eagerly. "You can tell me what are your suspicions at least—what, what are you afraid of, dear Helen?"

"Oh! Charles, Charles," she said, turning away her head, "I am afraid of you, or rather, I should say, for you—you are quick and hasty," she added, "and I am afraid that you might resent what certainly was an impertinence, in a manner that might bring misery on all that—that know you."

Lacy now understood her fully, and raising the beautiful hand he held in his to his lips, he kissed it repeatedly. "Thank you, dear Helen—thank you, thank you for your candour," he said. "Be thus frank with me completely, and tell me if our suspicions point at the same person."

"If you will promise me upon your honour," she said, "to take no farther notice of a matter in which we may

both be mistaken—I mean to take no—not to—not to—I do not know how to express myself.”

“You mean, not to call the scoundrel out!” replied Lacy, smiling. “Well, dear Helen, I will promise that.” But there was a certain look of meaning hung about Lacy’s lip as he spoke thus, which caught Helen’s attention, and she asked, “Without any mental reservation, Charles?”

Lacy laughed. “What mental reservation can I have, Helen?”

“Oh, I do not know,” she answered, smiling in return; “but now I certainly will not tell you. It is but a suspicion—I could not at all distinguish his features, and it was only something in the general appearance of the whole that made me think that it might be——”

“Well, well, dearest Helen,” replied Lacy, “I see that we have fixed upon the same person in our own minds, and that is sufficient.”

“Do not alarm me!” said Helen, turning pale again, and instinctively laying her hand upon his arm, as if to detain him, though Heaven knows he showed no disposition to leave her. “Do not alarm me! Oh, Charles—oh, Captain Lacy, you must indeed promise me to pursue this matter no farther. If you would have me know a moment’s case, you must promise me not—not to do what I see you are inclined to do.”

“If you mean I am to promise not to call him out, Helen,” he replied, “I have already done so. I cannot of course take such a step with a man against whom I have nothing to urge but suspicion—I do not think of it, I assure you.”

“You know, Charles,” cried Helen, warmly, “I disapprove of the whole system, but where your honour was really concerned, none would or should act but yourself, and I would not—no, indeed, I would not attempt to influence you—no, not though my heart should break.” She spoke warmly and eagerly, and as she did so, deep feeling and a quick imagination caused the shadows of manifold emotions to pass over her countenance, like light clouds over the sky; till at length, as her fancy called up the painful images of all that might follow the forbearance of which she spoke, the bright tears swam in her beautiful eyes.

It was not to be resisted! Lacy had already her hand in his, and gliding his arm round her waist he drew her to

his bosom, and kissed the blushing cheek over which such bright and beautiful expressions were passing. That act made the tears run over through the long dark lashes, and disentangling herself gently from his embrace, she gave him a look of grave reproach, as if she would have said, "Charles, you should not have done this!" but she did not speak, for she felt a faintness stealing over her that frightened her. Lacy knew that he was now bound in honour to go on; and, though he saw by her paleness how much he had agitated her, he thought it better to proceed at once. Leading, or perhaps I might say, supporting her to a sofa, he sat down beside her, and still keeping her right hand in his, he said, "Helen—dear Helen, although I had resolved to wait till my return from the Continent, yet, after what has passed, I must leave nothing unsaid."

"Oh! Charles, Charles, spare me now," cried Helen: "another time—if I could but get back to my room!" But Lacy went on—"Nay, nay, my dearest," he said, "compose yourself; I have nothing to say that should agitate you thus. That I love you deeply, sincerely, devotedly, you must have long known; and I will not do my dear Helen the injustice for one moment to suppose that she would have acted towards me as she has done unless she could return my affection."

Helen shook her head with a faint smile, as if to say, "You know that too well, Lacy;" and he continued,— "Well, then, Helen, let me speak with you calmly; for, having said thus much, I have still much to say, and we may not find another opportunity of speaking together, without the presence of others. Of course, Helen, I should be eager and anxious to secure the prize I have obtained, and if my dear Helen feels as I hope she does, she would not insist upon any long delay ere she gave me her hand; but this new breaking out of the war, and the absolute necessity of my joining my regiment immediately, of course interferes; and I think, from the motives I am about to give, that it will be better to keep our engagement to our own bosoms till after my return."

"Indeed, Charles," cried Helen, as he brought to her mind even by such a proposal the duty of communicating so important an engagement as that between herself and him to her father, "I believe that no consideration ought to prevent me from telling my father everything. Hitherto he has been my friend and confidant through life, and

surely I ought not to conceal anything from one placed by nature, and taught by affection, to guide and direct me on all occasions."

"But listen to me, dearest Helen, you shall hear my motives, and then you shall judge; for certainly you have every right to act as you think fit, when you have heard all and considered all. Some differences, as you know, exist at present between my father and yours; and I scruple not to say, that that scoundrel, Williamson, for some purposes of his own, has contrived in every way to aggravate those differences. Under these circumstances, both your father might object——"

"Oh, no indeed, Charles," exclaimed Helen, "he would not—I am quite, quite sure!"

"I am afraid, Helen, you are mistaken," answered Lacy, gravely, not well knowing how to explain all the difficulties which he foresaw, without hurting her feelings—"I am afraid you are mistaken. Your father is a proud man, and I think, Helen, that he might—nay, I am sure that he would—object to give his daughter to the son of a man with whom he has had some misunderstanding, unless—dearest Helen, I must say it, though the idea of fortune mingles but ill with such feelings as ours—unless he could give his child such a portion as he would consider she ought to have."

Helen turned pale, for she had now got the clue to Lacy's difficulties, and she understood and appreciated them all in a moment—but the first sensation was too painful to admit of speech, and her lover went on: "Now listen, dearest, to what I propose to do. My father and yours have met, and the evening has passed over, not only calmly, but, after having some private conversation with each other, they seemed mutually better satisfied. I wish to let events take their course for a time, till our parents grow, as I trust they will, from acquaintance into friendship. My addresses to you then will come under a very different aspect when I ask your father to give his daughter to the son of a friend, and not to the child of one who, he thinks, has recently ill-treated him. Under those circumstances, he may sacrifice any feeling of pride, in favour of our mutual affection. In the meantime, you are here with my cousin Mary, not more amiable and kind than judicious and right-minded. I can have no earthly objection to make her acquainted with my love for you, nor any to your consulting her upon every point of your behaviour. Indeed, I feel sure that she is

already well aware of my feelings, and would do anything to promote our happiness."

He paused, and Helen mused for a moment or two, but at length she replied, "I will do as you please—but in concealing anything from my father, I confess, Charles, I shall act against my better judgment. He values his daughter's happiness, I believe, too highly to oppose her where he knows that happiness is really implicated; but, even were it otherwise, Charles, I think I should be bound—equally bound, if not more strictly, to tell him all. He is my father, Charles, and I have always thought that a girl's duty towards her father was as imperative as that of a woman towards her husband; and I have often fancied that the man who sees that the person he loves has any concealment from her own father must learn to fear that, when she is his wife, she may have concealments from him also. Is it not true, Charles? am I not right?"

Lacy was struck, and even affected, for there was in her manner and her look a sort of deep-toned, thoughtful, and energetic expression, which he had never seen upon that lovely countenance before, and which gave it a new and even more touching interest in his eyes than it had previously possessed.

"Dear Helen," he replied; "dear, excellent girl! far be it from me to combat such feelings, though I might point out some shades of difference between the duties of a daughter and a wife; yet the principles upon which you act are too beautiful and too just for me to attempt to shake them by any petty distinctions. You shall tell your father, whatever be the consequences; but only, Helen, promise me two things, to guard me against those consequences: first, consult with Mary as to the best means of inducing your father not to oppose; and secondly, Helen, if you would have me know any peace, from this moment for evermore, promise me that you will never be the wife of another; and that, sooner or later, if we both live, you will be mine."

Helen bent her head, and for a moment there was one of those struggles in her heart, which doubt and fear urge against confidence and affection whenever we are about to take upon ourselves an irrevocable engagement. At length, still blushing and agitated, she lifted her eyes and placed her hand in that of Lacy's. "I may promise you that, Charles, at least," she said.

"Thank you, thank you, dearest Helen," he replied;

"now, at length, I have some assurance of happiness. During the last nine months, I have been in a state of mind in no degree enviable; though I am sure, if I could have foreseen all, I would have spoken long before."

"During the last nine months!" said Helen, in a tone of inquiry, and perhaps surprise.

"Yes, dearest Helen," answered Lacy, "ever since I left you at ——; for even there, I loved you as deeply, as fondly, as I do now."

"I fancied that it was so," replied Helen Adair, in the simplicity of her heart; "for I thought you would not behave so to any one you did not love."

A lover's curiosity is the most greedy of all things, and Lacy's was now roused to know whether Helen had even at that time loved him in return. She was not very willing to answer his questions, and yet not very skilful in evading them; and thus the conversation was prolonged farther than shall be recorded here. Nor shall we be so indiscreet as her lover, and pry into the secrets of Helen's heart. Lacy was satisfied; and, therefore, we having no further business with the matter, will only add, that when, about nine o'clock, Lady Mary Denham went to Helen's room, she found her there with some half-spoiled work under her hands, and her thoughts very differently employed indeed.

CHAPTER XV.

AT all times and all seasons, the letter-bag in a country house, nay, the very sound of the horses' feet that brings it from the next village, is an interesting thing. If it be so at all times, how much more was it in a house where, as in that of Lady Mary Denham, expectation in the breast of almost every one of her guests was, like a young soldier on an outpost, awake and ready to present and fire at everything. Each had their private sources of anxiety, apprehension, and hope—and besides all this, over the whole house, as over the whole country, reigned a thirst for those public tidings which were to raise still higher, or in some degree allay, the excitement of that extraordinary period.

"Have not the letters come, Mary?" asked Lacy, before breakfast was half over; "they must be late to-day."

"They come an hour later than they used to do, Charles," replied Lady Mary; "and the post-master at the village tells me, he being an Irishman, that it is all on account of the new road and the short cut. They arrive at ten, sometimes a little later."

Breakfast went by, and gentlemen and ladies rose and looked out of the window with the peculiar saunteringness generated in the human mind by breakfasting. Lacy observed that the sky was beginning to clear, and that it would be a fine day. Major Kennedy spoke a few words to Lady Mary in a low tone, about riding out over the hills, and other matters. Lord Methwyn asked Colonel Adair in a friendly tone, which did two hearts in the room a great deal of good, how he was going to bestow himself; and Colonel Adair was in the act of answering, when the butler with his own fat and fair fingers brought the letters into the room, and attracted all attention to himself. They were soon distributed, and it was found, that besides newspapers innumerable, almost every gentleman present had to receive an epistle, if not two, from some person or persons to the rest of the company unknown. Those who were diffident in regard to their powers of smiling over

bad news, if bad news should be within, carried their letters unopened to their own rooms; while the rest, who either expected no bad news, or felt confident they could command their faces to perform what evolutions they liked, begged each other's pardon, and broke the seals. Lord Methwyn was the first done, though, having received three epistles, it would have seemed that his burden was the heaviest. The secret however was, that they were, as he expressed it, only letters on important business, which might therefore be read at any time; and so, after gleaning throughout a few sentences, without much care as to nicety of folding, he crammed them into his pocket for his valet to remove at leisure. And yet Lord Methwyn was quite a man of business, and probably made out the general meaning of every letter he received within, at the utmost, three weeks after the day when it was delivered. On the present occasion, he ended the contemplation of his despatches just in time to find Colonel Adair, Major Kennedy, and Captain Charles Lacy each with an open letter in his hand, gazing upon each other with an air, not exactly of dismay, but at the very least of surprise. There was no look of secrecy in the countenance of either; and therefore, without ceremony, the peer exclaimed, "Well, Charles, what's the matter?—Well, Colonel, what is it?—Well, Kennedy, what has happened?—Will none of you, as well as looking black and grim, like the statue of Memnon, imitate that good gentleman of the desert, and utter sweet sounds?"

"Why, as all our letters seem much of the same form, and are apparently written upon the same stiff, official paper," said Lacy, in reply, "I doubt not that they are of the same unpleasant tenor, which may as well be told at once. This quick-witted fugitive from Elba has, it seems, made such good haste, and is making such rapid and gigantic preparations, that no time must be lost by his opponents; and I at least am here commanded to join immediately. How all one's pleasantest plans are overthrown in an hour! Here was I, Mary, intending five minutes ago to persuade you, and Miss Adair, and Lady Susan—(he added)—to ride over the hills to Hurraygap; and now I must think of nothing but post-horses as fast as possible."

There was more than one pale cheek in the room as Lacy told the contents of his letter, and as Colonel Adair and Major Kennedy confirmed his supposition that the epistles which they received were to the same effect. What

plan was to be pursued by each, was now the question; and while the women of the party stood by in silent grief waiting for the decision of the determining sex, and the gentlemen not concerned offered their advice to those who were, the three officers held a consultation together upon what was best for each. Colonel Adair was inclined to cut across the country at once, but Lacy showed him that such a proceeding would probably delay him as long and possibly might delay him much longer than by going at once to London, leaving his last orders with his agent and receiving the last commands of the Commander-in-chief, and then setting out upon the direct road. "We shall arrive to-night in time to see Greenwood, to-morrow morning we can see the duke, and before night we may be sixty or seventy miles on our way. Such is my plan, and if you and Kennedy, colonel, will take each a place in my carriage, I will answer for making the postboys do their best—what say you?"

"Shall we not put you to inconvenience?" demanded Colonel Adair.

"Far from it," replied Lacy; "your society will keep me as far as possible from melancholy thoughts—for it is not to be denied that to be disappointed of my ride over the hills, and of two or three days' enjoyment of such society as we have here, is enough even to make a gay heart feel sad."

His offer was immediately accepted by Colonel Adair; and at the same moment Lord Methwyn advanced, and in a tone and manner which were comforting to Helen's desponding heart, added to his son's proposal, by saying, "I hope, Colonel Adair, that during your stay in London you and Major Kennedy will make use of no house but mine. Look upon it as an inn, gentlemen, with this only difference—that it is an inn where you will be most welcome on your own account. I am only sorry," he added, "that the host is absent."

What might have been Colonel Adair's reply we cannot say if he had been left to himself; but Major Kennedy, on his part, accepted the invitation in such terms that Helen's father felt it would be ungracious to refuse. The bustle of preparation next succeeded: a servant was sent off for post-horses, and the party in the drawing-room broke up more gloomily than they had met.

As Helen followed her father to see whether she could assist him in any way, Lady Mary stayed her for a moment,

saying, "Come to me, Helen, in that little drawing-room in about half an hour." Helen promised to do so if she could find an opportunity; but that seemed improbable, for she felt that she could not well leave her father for any length of time during the last hour that they might ever have to spend together. There were also the tidings to be told of what had passed between herself and Lacy during the morning; and although she feared that, in the short time before them, and in all the hurry of preparation, she should not find a moment to do so without interrupting her father in what was absolutely necessary to be done, yet Helen, from a sense of duty, resolved to watch every opportunity, and not to fail, however much she might feel that such a communication would add terribly to the agitation she already experienced. Colonel Adair's arrangements, however, were sooner made than she expected; and as she saw them completed she was nerving her mind to begin her story, when suddenly he took her to his bosom, and, after kissing her repeatedly, to her surprise bade her leave him. "I have a letter to write," he said, "and I have also to ask the protection of the Almighty for her I leave without any protection but his. When you can learn that our admirable young friend is ready, Helen, come back to me. I know my Helen will do her best not to shake her father's firmness."

The tears came into Helen's eyes, and hurrying away, she paused a moment to wipe off those drops, and then proceeded in search of Lady Mary, who she was led to believe, from one or two of those little traits which escape all eyes but a woman's, might need consolation and support as well as herself. She opened the door of the little drawing-room to which Lady Mary had pointed without ceremony, but was instantly tempted to retreat on seeing Major Kennedy standing by the side of her friend, and holding her fair hand in his. As she hesitated, Lady Mary called her; "Come in, Helen come in, my dear cousin," she said; and then added to the other, with a bright warm flush on either cheek, "Well, so let it rest then! and now, Kennedy, leave me—leave me, I beg of you."

Without minding the presence of Miss Adair, Major Kennedy raised her hand to his lips and kissed it with deep emotion, and then, with one look of warm and grateful affection, turned and left the room. Helen advanced towards her friend, but Lady Mary saw the door close

before she spoke, and then exclaiming, "You see how it is Helen!" she threw her arms round her neck and burst into tears. For two or three moments—not longer—she thus indulged, but then starting up she wiped her eyes and said, "This is very foolish! but you have been weeping too, Helen—though, indeed, you have better cause than I have, for you are parting with a father and a lover too."

Helen's cheek now in turn grew red; but Lady Mary continued—"Do not think I do not see it, Helen. It is upon that very subject I wished to speak with you, to ask you plainly, though most kindly, my dear cousin, if Lacy has spoken to you as he ought to do before he quits England. I am sure he intended to do so while here if he did not do so before; but these sudden orders may interfere, and if I gave him no opportunity, he might have none, so I sent just now to beg him to come hither."

"Oh! no, Mary, for Heaven's sake do not!" cried Helen; "let me go, dear Mary. Indeed, indeed, he has done all that is right, all that I could—could—but do let me go, I hear some one coming!"

"The very reason you should stay," answered Lady Mary; and almost as she spoke Lacy entered the room. Haste and eagerness were in his eyes, but not unmingled with a look of pleasure when he saw Helen and his cousin together. Advancing at once towards them, he took the hand of each in his, "Thank you, Mary! thank you for this moment," he said; "and as it is but a moment, let me use it to say, that under your care, and to your kindness, I leave all that I value most in life. Mary, I need not tell you to love her, and to esteem her; that, you will do for her own sake; and all that is kind and affectionate which is not implied by those two words, let me beg you to do towards her for mine."

"I will, Charles," answered Lady Mary; "having ever regarded you as my brother, I promise you in all things to regard her as my sister, and as your wife."

"Do so, do so!" answered Lacy, and then added in a low, but still distinct tone, "And if I should fall, Mary, then——"

"Then, Charles," answered Mary, "my affection and tenderness towards her, and hers towards me, will be hallowed and confirmed by our mutual grief. But I will leave you now——"

Helen could not speak to beg her not, for she was drowned in tears, but she held out her hands implor-

ingly towards her; and Lacy said, "No, stay, Mary! we have but a moment; the horses are putting to!—Helen, dearest Helen, farewell—I feel assured, I feel a presentiment, that we shall meet again in happiness;" and throwing his arms tenderly round her, he pressed one kiss upon her lips. "Farewell, too, dear Mary," he said, kissing her also, though with a different warmth;—"and now let us do what we can to hide these deeper feelings from the eye of the world! Is your excellent father prepared, my beloved?"

"I will seek him," said Helen, and pausing but one moment to wipe away her tears, she left Lacy with his cousin, and ran to her father's room. Colonel Adair was in the act of sealing a letter, and when Helen entered he gave it to her, saying, "Helen, in the course of nature, my love, you must survive me, and whenever it happens that you are so left, send this letter by some confidential person to Lord Adair."

He spoke in an ordinary, business-like tone, for he saw the traces of very recent tears upon his daughter's face, and he was resolved not to say anything that might shake her fortitude or his own; but tears are ever prolific of tears, and the eyes which have been lately weeping will always pour forth a fresh shower at words which on any other occasion would have had no effect. Helen wept again, but Colonel Adair pressed her to his heart, saying, "Do not! do not, my dearest Helen! Be firm! And now God bless and protect you, my dear child!" and then kissing her twice or thrice, he turned to the door, adding, "All is ready, I fancy—perhaps, Helen, you had better stay here."

"Oh! no, no!" exclaimed she, "I will behave better, indeed I will!" and clinging to her father for one more embrace, she followed him down to the hall. The wheels of the carriage were heard grating round the front of the house, and as Helen with her father reached the last step of the great staircase, Lacy and Lady Mary came out of the little drawing-room, where he had lingered to give his cousin some explanations and to express some wishes, and greeting Colonel Adair kindly, he asked if he were ready. The old officer replied in the affirmative, and the whole party moved across towards the great drawing-room; while Lady Mary, as they went, with her native kindness of heart ever prominent, tried zealously to take every care from the mind of Colonel Adair, by the fondest ex-

pression of love and esteem towards his daughter. Major Kennedy was found already prepared and waiting; and the carriage having come up, the whole party assembled walked out to see the three soldiers depart. Then might one have marked many a different shade of human character expressed in the adieus which were given and received. Helen struggled, and struggled successfully, to repress the tears that would fain have burst forth again; Colonel Adair was grave even to sternness, for he felt that if he slackened for one moment the rigid rein in which he held his feelings, all composure would be gone; Major Kennedy was gloomy and sad, and though a ray of bright satisfaction seemed to break from his eyes when he took Lady Mary's hand for the last time, the clouds rolled over it again in a moment; Lacy strove to smile, but it was evidently an effort; and Lord Methwyn merely shook his son by the hand, and wished him good-by, with a laugh and a jest, as if he had been going for a tour of pleasure. Lady Mary Denham had perhaps the hardest task of all, for there was no one in that carriage for whom she dared shed tears before the world; and, by a powerful but unmarked effort, she refrained. All the farewells were spoken; the three who parted entered the vehicle, the servants mounted on the outside, and the horses dashed off. Helen instantly took refuge in her room, and Lady Mary, after begging Lady Pontypool, who had purposely avoided the parting, to go down and entertain her guests for an hour, retired to her own private apartments also, and locking the door, sat down to weep in quiet.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN Lady Mary Denham, having successfully conquered her inclination to weep, and obliterated the traces of the tears she had shed, came down again to the drawing-room, she found that all her guests had been put to flight, and that her valorous Aunt Pontypool alone remained in possession of the field. Concluding, however, that their dispersion had been effected by some ordinary means, she proceeded to seek her cousin, Helen Adair; and the conversation naturally, though against all the previous determinations of both, turned to the parting which they had that morning undergone; and both Helen and Lady Mary agreed, that, however imaginary might be the gratification, it would still be no slight satisfaction to be nearer to those who were dear to them, were such a thing possible, even though they saw no more of them than they should do under their present circumstances. Neither would speak fully all that they felt, for fear of communicating to the other the images of dangers, and sorrows, and agonies which each called up before the eye of imagination; but still the same thoughts were predominant in the bosom of both, and they fancied what a consolation it would seem, to be near enough, in case those they loved were wounded, or prisoners, or ill, or dying, to give them all that comfort which the hand of affection can alone bestow.

As they thus thought, both fell into a long fit of musing, and at length Lady Mary started up, exclaiming, "Well, dearest Helen, are you ready to come down and go out, for if we do not find means of amusing all the people that are here in such a way, that they can say nothing more for their lives than that Lady Mary Denham and Miss Adair are the two most charming creatures in the world, they will be sure to find out that we have been weeping for absent lovers, and equally sure to tell the world of their discovery."

Helen agreed that that would never do, and accompanying her friend, they sought out the female part of the guests at least, and proposed an excursion to the neigh-

bouring town, as the best means of expending their idleness.

Thus an expedition in carriages and on horseback was concerted and perpetrated, and the whole party returned, with one or two additions which joined it by the way, just in time to dress for dinner. At that meal they again assembled with great hilarity, forgetting totally, with the exception of Helen, Lady Mary, and my Aunt Pontypool, that there were any such persons on the face of the earth as Colonel Adair, Charles Lacy, and Major Kennedy. During dinner, however, Lady Mary, who had taken care to station on the one side of her Lord Methwyn, and on the other the veteran officer, whose internal conformation did not seem by nature to have been destined for warfare, found an opportunity of turning the conversation towards the struggle about to take place on the Continent. The general eagerly entered upon the subject with all the enthusiasm and zeal of a man who wished to appear what he is not; detailed all the movements which he had gathered that morning from the newspapers; related the events which were taking place in Prussia, Austria, and Russia; and drew a splendid sketch of the grand spectacle which Belgium and the Lower Rhine would present as the armies gradually gathered together for battle. Lady Mary really caught some of the enthusiasm, and exclaimed, "A magnificent sight indeed! I should like to behold it."

"And why not behold it, my dear young lady?" demanded the general; "why should you not behold it? Why not spend a few weeks during the summer at Brussels? It is a delightful town, a most charming residence. I am sure, were it not that imperative duties keep me at home, I should to a certainty go over to watch the progress of events, and fix my head-quarters either at Ghent or Brussels."

"Yes, but you are a man and a soldier, my dear sir," replied Lady Mary, "and do not take dangers into consideration. Remember, I am a woman, and dangers are great things to me."

"There are no dangers at all, I can assure you, my dear lady," replied the general, whose cue it was for the present to undervalue the very idea of peril. "No danger at all! why, all our fair dames of fashion I understand are flocking over as fast as the troops, so that good old Louis Dix-huit has a fairer court in the city of Ghent than ever he could get together in his own capital of Paris."

"I am sure if I thought that, I would go too," cried Lady Mary. "Nothing like novelty you know, general; and the sound of the cannon and the beating of the drums, would certainly give a great zest to the ball-room, and much effect to minuet. What say you, dear Helen, will you go with me?"

"Oh, I am a soldier's daughter you know, Mary," replied Miss Adair, "and therefore I have no fears; I will go wherever you venture."

And now we will begin with a little bit of landscape in a different country, which there is at least a chance of the reader knowing nothing in the world about.

The merry month of May was over; and a season which promised to be both hot and rainy was setting in, when two English post-carriages, with four horses each, and a single postilion riding one horse and flanking three attached to each vehicle, might have been seen upon a flat road, with an ocean of mud on either hand, and a thin stripe of paved causeway winding along in the centre. On both sides of the road was a ditch—if in width, profundity, willows, and water, it did not deserve the name of a canal,—and behind this ditch or canal was in general a hedge-row, and a number of shady trees. Behind this hedge-row again might be seen, from the elevation at which people in a carriage of those days were placed, manifold fields, divided by other ditches or canals and other hedge-rows. Numbers innumerable of fruit-trees were scattered over all the country, and from amidst the grove of leaves and blossoms thus created, peeped out continual cottages, unseen till one was immediately upon them, and then only seen for a moment ere they were hidden again by the trees. Now this description we rather imagine applies but to one spot upon the earth; and, therefore, the reader who has travelled—and what reader has not?—will at once discover the name and geographical position of the land through which the carriages were driving; but should there yet remain a being in all England who has not put his foot beyond his own happy and beautiful country, to him we will reveal that the track which we have attempted to describe lies between Antwerp and the fine old town of Ghent, and is called the Pays de Waes.

By the time at which the carriages reached the distance of seven miles from Ghent, the sun was below the horizon. It was not dark, nevertheless, for a still clear twilight followed, leaving all the features of the landscape plainly

discernible, though a shade was over them all. Just at this period, the road being very long and straight, the two ladies who occupied the first carriage—feeling occasionally that sort of vague and indistinct alarm generated by first acquaintance with a strange country, and that more definite and precise kind of fear caused by a knowledge that great and terrible events are soon about to happen, and consequently looking anxiously out of the windows of the carriage when any new object presented itself upon the road—perceived—though the nominative case is a long way off—perceived a horseman riding on quietly at the distance of perhaps half a mile before them; and instantly the fancies of either and of each began busily to investigate his name, character, and profession with very little result.

"Do you know I almost wish we had not ventured, Helen," said Lady Mary Denham, as she contemplated the back of the cavalier, and could make nothing of him; "and yet the duchess wrote that we should be just as safe as if we were at Alton."

"The Flemings are a very honest race, I believe," replied Helen; "but yet, of course, when large bodies of men are marching through the country, there are always a number of fearful wretches who follow to see what they can obtain in the confusion and disorder of war and all its horrible consequences. I have heard my father say, that when he was in the Peninsula, there were whole troops of Spaniards used to follow the army for the sole purpose of plundering the wounded and the dead."

"I wish we were in Brussels!" was Lady Mary's reply; "and really," she added, "I do not see why the postilions should go so fast. They may let that man get on first."

"Oh! but, Mary, with all the servants outside," said Helen, "I do not think that we have anything to fear from one man."

"But look! there are more coming out of the field!" cried Lady Mary; and Helen, as she gazed on, certainly did see five or six men issue forth from the enclosures by the road-side, and approach the horseman. They were apparently no confederates of his, however; for though the two ladies could not exactly distinguish what was taking place, they saw generally that the men on foot gathered round the other as if to speak with him, and then they could distinguish what appeared to be poles raised and blows given. A flash, as of a pistol, also broke from the little group, and the postilions putting their

horses into full gallop, made all haste towards the spot. The men on foot did not seem inclined to betake themselves to flight, notwithstanding the approach of the carriage, though it was evident that they had by this time struck the horseman from his beast, and were apparently handling him very roughly as he lay on the ground, while one of them called loudly to the postilions to drive on, and mind their own business.

Helen and Lady Mary gazed eagerly forward, as they came up, to discover what was really taking place; but a pistol-shot from one of their own people at the back of the carriage, and then another immediately after, showed clearly what interpretation the servants put upon the scene before them. The postilions, too, stopped, and Mary's attendants leapt to the ground one after the other to take part in the fray; but seeing such formidable numbers coming against them, the men who had been attacking and apparently plundering the horseman, began to separate.

He himself at the same time struggled up in the midst, and with a powerful arm, snatching one of the hoes with which he had been assailed from the hands of the aggressors, laid about him with a degree of vigour and skill which converted their hesitation into rapid flight. Embarrassed, however, by being obliged to carry one of their comrades, who had been wounded by a pistol-shot, it seemed possible to overtake the culprits; and Lady Mary's servants were in the act of pursuing when they were stayed by the voice of the horseman, exclaiming in good clear English, "Don't run after the blackguards! don't you run after them! If they get you amongst those cursed hedges and ditches, they'll murder you to a certainty."

"Open the door, Frank!" said Lady Mary, seeing that the person who spoke, and who was a strong powerful Englishman, upwards of six feet high, dressed in a military blue coat, &c., and in whom the reader may doubtless recognise Adjutant Green, was bleeding profusely from a severe cut upon his head, and leaned with an expression of pain upon the hoe of which he had deprived his assailants: "Open the door, Frank. I am afraid you are terribly hurt, sir!"

"Oh, no, madam," replied Green, advancing with apparent difficulty to the side of the carriage, "not much hurt, I believe. A little giddy just now, though I didn't

feel it while I was licking them—but it will go off in a minute.”

While this brief conversation had been going on at the side of the first carriage, Louisa Green, who was with the second vehicle, had recognised her uncle, and, as soon as she could reach him, her arms were thrown round him, while, with her eyes full of tears, and her face as pale as death, she looked at the blood streaming from his brow, and the traces of various blows which his person and apparel exhibited in many parts.

“What, Loo! what, is that you?” cried the soldier; “but never cry, my dear child—this is a flea-bite, Louisa—a mere nothing. If they had not been six to one, I’d have made them tell another tale—or if I had not been fool enough to leave my sabre at Ghent, when I went back to see after the horses that fell sick at Lokeren. But how could one tell, when a country fellow came up and asked what o’clock it was, that the man behind him would knock you off your horse while you were looking at your watch?”

Some further explanation now ensued, and Adjutant Green thanked Lady Mary in no ungrateful, though not the most fashionable terms, for her goodness in stopping, and for her kindness to his niece; but he persisted that he was able to ride into Ghent, and saying that he would accompany the carriages, he mounted with some difficulty, after one of the servants had caught his horse. For about a mile resolution overcame pain and weakness, and he continued to follow the carriages at the distance of a few yards. At the end of that space, however, he spurred forward, and making the postilion stop, spoke to Lady Mary through the window—“I am afraid I am more hurt than I thought, my lady,” he said; “and if you will just let one of the men ride my horse into the town, I will get up into the rumble, for I feel as if I could not sit him all the way to the town, and it would not do to drop off, your ladyship may believe.”

“I can believe it very well, Mr. Green,” replied Lady Mary Denham; “but I will have my way now. Frank, open the door again, and bid William take Mr. Green’s horse. Now tell my Aunt Pontypool that, if it will not put her to inconvenience to go on into Ghent with me and Miss Adair, I think it will be better for Mr. Green to go in that carriage, and then he will have his own niece beside him. You should not have attempted to ride at

all, Mr. Green ; but I am commander-in-chief now, so say not a word, but obey orders." Green touched his hat in due form, and the arrangement proposed by Lady Mary was soon effected, as good Lady Pontypool, whose feelings through the whole business we have not been able to decide upon, would have walked barefooted into Ghent rather than that any of her fellow-creatures should suffer for a moment.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE fine old town of Ghent, which is still one of the worst lighted in Europe, was excessively dark when the carriages of Lady Mary Denham and her party drove up to the inn at the corner of the great Market-place. Mine host and his troop stared a little to mark—what had been of late a rare occurrence—the arrival of three ladies without husband, brother, or son in a suit of regimentals; but when the door of the second carriage was opened, and out of it was produced the form of a tall soldier, with the blood just clotting on his brow and hair, every Fleming present asked if there had been a battle. The servants thereupon of course explained; and Green being now unable to walk, was by Lady Mary's desire carried up and put to bed, while a surgeon was sent for, and at his own request information of the accident which had befallen him was transmitted to the commanding officer of his regiment, a considerable part of which was still in Ghent. Several of the officers, with that laudable and kindly feeling which distinguishes the British soldier, immediately came to visit their hurt companion, forgetting instantly, on finding that he required attention and assistance, all those little peculiarities which on other occasions reminded them that he had risen from the ranks. The surgeon at once pronounced that one of the ribs had been broken, but at the same time removed all apprehension from the mind of his niece, by assuring her that her uncle would soon be well; and Lady Mary determined upon her report to proceed on her way in two or three days, provided she could make up her mind to proceed at all.

In the meantime, however, she did all that kindness and attention could do, to make the hurt soldier comfortable under the circumstances in which he was placed. His niece remained with him constantly, and acted the part of nurse; and Lady Mary herself, with Lady Pontypool and Helen, visited his chamber more than once, like true dames of romance. Green was not insensible to such kindness, and though he was so much better by the third day as to be able to rise, and come down to thank the

ladies for their attention, he felt and expressed as much gratitude as if both his necessities and their services had been greater. Lady Mary received him with every expression of kindness, and making him seat himself on the sofa beside her, spoke with interest of the attack that had been made upon him, and both its causes and its consequences.

"Why, as to its causes," replied Green; "why, your ladyship will see that I cannot well understand them. Doubtless, the rascals wanted my money or my watch, which is a good gold one; but yet, when I was down, they none of them tried to take anything from me. I wish to God I had had my sabre, for then it would have been another affair; but as it was, I had but time to fire one pistol, and a wonder it was that I had any pistols with me at all. I was going incog.-like about the horses, though the colonel knew very well what I was after, and said I was very right; indeed, he went as far as to say when I asked leave, that I was always thinking of the good of the service. But as I was saying, I was quite incog. and did not intend to appear military at all; only when I met Ensign Williamson and his father, they said that there were a great many bad parties about, and that they had heard of a great deal of mischief and plundering done down about the Tête de Flandre—so I put my pistols in the holsters, which was nothing, as all the world ride with pistols here."

Adjutant Green's style, as the reader may have observed, was in common conversation somewhat excursive and rambling, so that to Lady Mary and Helen his reasonings were not at all times quite clear, nor the connection between one idea and another perfectly evident. They were then both revolving this circumstance in their own minds, and internally feeling amused at the somewhat saltatory course of his thoughts, when he suddenly gave them a fresh instance of his propensity to leap by turning to Helen, and observing, "Talking of that, ma'am, you've been very kind indeed to me, and I should like to know whether you are not a daughter of that Captain Henry Adair, who was a grandson of the last Lord Adair, and who married pretty Miss Helen Beverley, daughter of Doctor Beverley, the Rector of Stoke Norton?"

"The same precisely!" replied Helen; "my father is now Colonel Adair, and is with his regiment either in the town of Brussels itself, or very near it."

"Well. I know your father very well, Miss Helen," he continued; "and I knew your good grandfather the rector—ay! and your great-grandfather the old lord, too. My father, poor fellow, farmer Green, held a large farm at Stoke Norton; and I can say from my heart, that your good grandfather never took a farthing more than was right for tithes in his life. But I can't make out, Miss Helen, how it is they tell me you're not rich."

Lady Pontypool coloured up to the eyes, and Lady Mary was a little uneasy; but Helen was affected by no unpleasant emotion, at the mention of facts which she never attempted to conceal either from herself or from any one else; and without one sign of annoyance she replied, "We never were rich; but almost all my father had was lost in the beginning of this year by the failure of Mr. —, his agent; so we are poorer now than ever, I am sorry to say."

"But I can't make out that either," persevered Adjutant Green. "Why, did not your father come into one-half of your great-grandfather's property? I always understood so."

Helen shook her head with a faint smile: "No, indeed, I believe not," she said; "my father offended him by his marriage, you know."

"Ay!" said Adjutant Green, "so he did, I remember—but yet, I think it's a hard case—I can't make it out—that made no difference in the end. I know I shall tell Lord Adair so, the next time I see him."

"Oh! no, indeed you had better not," replied Helen; "he is bound, I have heard, never to hold any communication with my father, so that it would be all in vain." ag

"I do not know that, miss—but at all events I'll age and I only beg pardon for talking to you about your ted business in such a way." the

Shortly after, the gallant soldier took his leave fair retired to his own chamber. more

By this time, Lady Mary had become so much lonely tomed to the scene around her, to the occasional din of military, and to the bustle and rumours of the day, that her alarm had worn off, and she was preparing to break to Lady Pontypool, in the gentlest manner possible, her desire of going on to Brussels the next morning, when, to her surprise, Lady Pontypool, after a silence of ten minutes, and the accomplishment of five hundred stitches of her netting, broke forth with, "Don't you

think, Mary, that we had better soon proceed to Brussels; I do not believe, my love, that we should be in any more danger there than here?"

"Nor I either, my dear aunt," replied Mary; "the Duke of Wellington will never suffer the French to come as far as Brussels, depend upon it; and I was just thinking of proposing to you, and Helen, to set out early to-morrow. If we wait here in Ghent much longer, all our troops will be marching on, so that many of our friends we shall not see again before they face the enemy."

Mary ended with a sigh as she thought of all that the meeting with the enemy of which she spoke might bring about. Deep below the sparkling surface of her general demeanour lay strong affections and feelings intense and acute;—and now, when such images rose up before her, when she pictured to herself the man who had gone forth to battle and to danger joyfully, because the hope of obtaining her led him on,—and represented him falling on the field or dying of the wounds there received,—Mary Denham, gay, happy, thoughtless Mary Denham, as the world held her to be, felt but too keenly that a woman's heart might break even under the weight of sorrows by no means uncommon in this world.

It needed scarcely five minutes of such thought to make her resolve upon hurrying on to Brussels with all speed; and had it been possible, she would have sought the very battle-plain itself, in the midst of the strife—for what, oh, what are woman's fears, when matched against woman's love? The next morning, then, at a very early hour, the courier set off, in order to bespeak horses and engagements; and before seven o'clock in the evening, the whole party followed, rolling on towards the western capital as fast as fat Flemish horses could drag minds. The proportion of the disciplined and orderly now was much greater than that of the doubtful and the uncertain, that neither Mary nor Helen, nor even my Aunt Mary, entertained any alarm; and the number of known faces which might be distinguished, and the sound of English voices which might be heard from time to time, gave a home and familiar air to the whole. As they approached Brussels, the swarms which covered the high-ways increased; the augmented demand for every sort of necessary and luxury, occasioned by the presence of so many strangers in the capital, of course brought multitudes of the people from much more distant parts of the

country than usual to sell their goods while the market lasted; and gaily-decked asses covered with vegetables, fowls, lambs, and even calves, were seen ambling along pressed by their eager masters and mistresses in the hope of gain; horses too, adorned with fine black leather harness, and long peculiar carts, all similarly loaded, occupied the road; and ever and anon, with somewhat dusty apparel but gay and soldier-like demeanour, a regiment or a party of British soldiers were overtaken as they wound in and out amongst all the vehicles that obstructed the highway.

Although the distance between Ghent and Brussels is so short, and no accident occurred to delay the carriages, yet Lady Mary and her party did not reach the capital till near three o'clock, so great was the difficulty of passing all the train that encumbered the road, and so much was the time consumed in the operation. At length, however, they entered Brussels, and began mounting that long and terrible hill which, in the midst of unrivalled lace and the most beautiful display of 'lingerie' in the world, leads up from the lower to the higher town.

In the course of that hill, how many faces which had been accustomed to stare into Lady Mary's carriage as it drove down St. James' Street, stared into it in Brussels! It was scarcely possible to conceive oneself not in England, and the number of her own sex and country which she beheld at every corner relieved Mary's heart of all fear, and soothed and pleased Helen, who, though she had expressed no alarm, had not perhaps felt it less. One or two bows did Lady Mary receive from gay-looking officers, as she was recognised by old acquaintances in driving through the town; and when at length the carriage dashed up to the inn, and turned into the high-arched gateway, the courier was in waiting to throw open the door; but beside him appeared ready to welcome the fair visitors three persons whose appearance there set more than one heart beating—Lacy, Kennedy, and Colonel Adair!

CHAPTER XVIII.

IN Brussels, about the period of which we speak, in the widest of the three streets which lead down towards the church of St. Gudule, there was a very handsome coffee-house, fitted up in the style of an English establishment of the same kind, and kept by a Dutchman who resided in Great Britain for some years during the French occupation of his native land, and in one of the boxes sat two personages a few evenings after the arrival of Helen and Lady Mary Denham in the Belgian capital. They were father and son, and no other than John Williamson, Esq., attorney-at-law, and Ensign John Williamson, of the —— regiment. What had been the conversation which had previously taken place becomes us not to inquire; but at the moment that we entered the room, the younger of the two was saying to the elder—“Ay, but you know those very fine girls are always devilish shy at first. She’ll come to her senses, father, depend upon it—she’ll not hold out—if she finds that she cannot do better.”

“Ay, but that is what I am afraid of!” responded Mr. Williamson, senior. “She may think she can do better, and I tell you, Johnny, she must and shall marry you.”

“That she shall certainly,” answered the youth, “if I can get her; and I am very sure that if I had her alone for a while every now and then, I could persuade her; for she was always very kind and gentle as a girl, and I have heard Laura and Wilhelmina say that they could get her to give them anything, or do anything, except what her father forbade her. But the difficulty is how to get her alone, for that Lady Mary Denham is not over civil.”

“Nor was she herself over civil, I think,” replied the lawyer; “she was as cold as ice.”

“Ay, but that is all come on newly,” answered the son. “Why I told you how very kind and all that she was just after the old colonel’s things were sold off, and what she said about you—that they could never repay you or sufficiently thank you for your kindness upon such an occasion. If I had asked her then, she would not have said

no; for she's very romantic, and would have done anything to show her gratitude."

"Ay, but the old colonel would have held out," said the father; "I knew well enough that one must bring his pride thoroughly down, before one can do anything with him. That was the reason I had the whole stock sold—to bring down his cursed pride, and make him grateful to me at the same time. However, I don't think she is so romantic as you fancy! I knew that scheme about Alton would fail."

"Ay, but why did it fail?" cried the other; "only because I could not get hold of her before I was seen. I saw well enough when I called on them that day in London, that she expected a proposal, and wished Charles Lacy out of the way all the time; and if I could have got ten minutes' speech of her down at Alton, she'd have been off with me, I'll bet. Oh, hang it! what between the moonlight and the carriage-and-four, and the fun of the thing, which a woman always likes, she'd have been persuaded. Now you see this Lady Mary has tutored her, and made her as cold and proud as herself. The only one who seemed kind and polite of the party this morning, was that old Lady Pontypool; and she got you into the corner, and was very attentive to you."

"Curse her attention!" cried the father, somewhat angrily; "why, she was asking me all manner of impertinent questions about things that she has nothing to do with: but if I find she has been inquiring elsewhere too closely, I must take other measures. I don't think, John, you pressed the girl half close enough after all."

"Why, what would you have me do," demanded the other, "with that Lady Mary sitting close beside her, and whenever I said anything civil to Helen, beginning to talk to her of something else? Very uncivil I thought it! and Helen Adair scarcely attended either; but she was afraid of showing one what she felt before them, I dare say."

"Well, well, John, we must get on quicker than we have to-day," answered the father, "or we shall bring our eggs to a bad market, I fear;—so see to it, Johnny!"

"Oh, as for that, I do not care a d——," answered the ensign; "if she holds her head high, and has got new notions into it, because Lady Mary calls her cousin, she may just carry it which way she likes; there are other girls as handsome, who will be very glad to have me I

know, and with better fortunes too—and you know, father, that's the best after all—so she may live and learn, you know."

"You are a fool, John!" replied his father, tenderly; "you always were a fool; you think you see a great way, and you are as blind as a mole. Do you fancy, you foolish fellow, that I want you to marry the girl because she has a pretty face, that you may have a race of beggars to call me grand-papa? Nonsense, you dolt! I want you to marry her because—properly managed, as I know how to manage it—your marriage with her may make your fortune—ay, put us all in a situation which we never could get hold of anyway else."

"But where the deuce she should get the fortune, I do not see," answered the son; "if it were not that the old lord had got an heir, she might one day come into the money there; but at present, she has not a rap I have understood; and Henry Adair will keep her out of the other."

"Never you mind that," replied the father. "Let me alone to know where money lies. I tell you, that your marriage with her would be worth more than twenty thousand a-year to you. I have not been working to bring it about all this time for nothing, and I have been labouring so hard for that one purpose, that if it had not been for that consummate, interfering, sentimental puppy, Charles Lacy, I would have brought them to such terms before this time, that you would have had the ring on her finger a month ago. But tell me, John, you saw Captain Lacy there one morning; didn't you? You don't think he has a hankering after the girl, eh? do you?"

As he spoke, the swing door of the coffee-room gave a slight squeak, followed by the sound of some steps, and a gruff voice, demanding in French some punch. The father listened, but the sounds ceased as the strangers took their places; and the son replied, speaking of Lacy, "Oh no! not he! he's to be married to that Lady Mary. I heard my friend, Lord John Blackheath, in our regiment, say, that he had been told so by old Lady Pontypool herself; and laugh heartily at Lady Mary running after him over here."

"Well well, if that be the case, we shall soon manage the other girl," replied the father, lowering his tone a little at first, on account of the strangers. "I must try means to get her father to send her away from these people

back to England, for they will teach her to think herself a very great person, and throw every obstacle in the way; and if I cannot persuade the old gentleman to do it—I must try other means, that's all. I say, John, you've been some time in the army; now are you up to a coup de main—dare you venture a bold stroke for a wife, my boy?"

"Why, I suppose I dare venture as bold a stroke as another man," replied the ensign; "but I think it is always better not to take one without necessity, either."

"Ay, ay! but when they come in your way never hesitate, John," retorted his father. "I always thought so from a boy; and I can tell you, that if it had not been for one or two bold strokes when I was a youth of your own age, you would never have been Ensign John Williamson, and heir to two thousand a-year. But I'll make you heir to more before I have done with you, John, if you will but follow my advice—that I will."

"Oh, that I will, of course, sir," answered the son; "only let me see my way clearly, and I will do anything, because I do like the girl. I was only thinking, you know, sir, that one must be cautious; for you know when we laid our plan down at Alton, I had very near got into a scrape. I have a great notion that Lacy has an idea of who it was he ran after through the park so sharply, for he was curst cool when I saw him the other day, so we must mind what we are about."

"Ay, ay! but we are in another country now," replied his father, "and we may have a thousand opportunities. Besides, my boy, I am beginning to fancy that this may be our last chance; so we must make a bold hit, or lose all; not only the twenty thousand a-year, but perhaps all I have got into the bargain. I have not seen the old colonel yet; but when I do see him, I will press him home; and if he do not come to terms, I will find means to make him repent it."

Thus proceeded the conversation, with a strong looking towards self-interest characterising it throughout, but with no such clear and distinct reference to persons and things as to enable any one not previously acquainted with the circumstances to detect the latent plans of Messrs. Williamson, father and son. A shrewd person overhearing their conversation might, indeed, by no very remote process of reasoning, have learned to infer that Monsieur Williamson père was a confirmed rogue, and that Monsieur Williamson fils, with an inferior capacity, was neverthe-

less filially desirous of treading in the steps of his parent : but that was all. Still, when two or three more persons of different kinds entered the estaminet, the two who had first tenanted it began to sip their beverage with more alacrity, continuing their conference in disjointed sentences only, and that in a low tone. At length the quiet of the estaminet was disturbed by a loud and authoritative voice, though the body from which it proceeded was unseen, pronouncing these warning words, " I'll tell you what, Mr. Williamson ! If you are a gentleman, as I take you to be, behave as such, and act according-*ly*."

The swing door of the estaminet creaked, and squeaked, and rattled ; and after having gazed a moment in his father's face with looks of horror and astonishment, Ensign John Williamson started up just in time to see a pair of broad unghostly shoulders making their exit from the room. The father vowed that such a speech was very unhand-some, very ungentelemanly indeed ; and in his bluffest and most bullying tone declared, while he sat quite still in the box, that if he could discover who it was he would horse-whip him. The son grinned, and observed, that he did not think it was a horsewhippable person ; and the conversation returned to other subjects, but was now carried on in a whisper across the table. It ended, however, in the father expressing his determination to go that moment to see the old colonel, and if possible to bring matters to an issue.

With Colonel Adair matters were brought sooner to an issue than Mr. Williamson thought. He found the old officer at home, and alone, exactly as he could have wished, but not exactly in the most desirable frame of mind for his purpose. As he entered the small apartment in which the old officer was sitting, Colonel Adair rose up before him as tall, and as straight, and as stiff as a cyprus tree. He pointed to no chair, he uttered no words of greeting ; but to Mr. Williamson's salutation, replied, " hum !" and put his hands behind his back to avoid the grasp of the attorney's fist. Nothing daunted, however, the lawyer attributed all signs of coolness to " some of the old gentleman's qucer ways," cast himself into a seat, and while Colonel Adair stood still, proceeded to tell him of various matters, some real, some fictitious, which had brought him to Brussels.

" I am happy, sir," replied Colonel Adair in return, " that you have come, and I am happy that I have seen

you, inasmuch as what is disagreeable is always better brought to an end at once ; and I have much wished to tell you, that I look upon the part you have acted between Lord Methwyn and myself as most unhandsome, and ungentlemanly ; and, consequently, that I do not intend to have the honour of knowing you any more."

The grizzled gray bristles of Mr. Williamson's head rose up on end with surprise. Had he visited the post-office that morning, no such convulsion of his fell of hair might have taken place, as we shall show hereafter ; but, having convinced himself that in their last conversation he had contrived thoroughly to persuade Colonel Adair of his good wishes towards him, he was astonished in no moderate degree at a salutation so little either expected or agreeable. He never was long, however, without a reply : "Very odd !" he said, "very odd, indeed ! But I see, my dear colonel, that you have suffered yourself again to be deceived, and me to be misrepresented—though I am sure I have given you proof enough of my regard, and all that sort of thing."

"Sir, I have not been deceived," replied Colonel Adair ; "you have not been misrepresented, unless your own hand-writing has deceived me and misrepresented you. Lord Methwyn, in justification of himself, put your letter to him regarding my affairs into my own hands, and I now know precisely where to look for the source of all the unpleasant things which have occurred within the last three or four months."

"He did, did he ?" cried the astounded, but not abashed and unabashable Mr. Williamson ; "he showed you my letter ! very unhandsome, indeed, I must say ! very unhandsome indeed !"

"Very unhandsome, indeed, to write it !" replied Colonel Adair, "but not in the least to show it, when he found that the writer wished to fix upon him the imputation of the actions which that letter prompted."

"Why, what the devil would you have had me do ?" cried Mr. Williamson, in a loud and heated tone—for he was one of those people whom we may call blunt hypocrites, for the genus hypocrite is full of varieties—"what the devil would you have had me do ? Lord Methwyn demanded my opinion of your solvability ; should I not have felt like a scoundrel if I told my principal that you were solvent when you were not ? What the devil would you have had me do ?"

"In the first place, sir," replied Colonel Adair, sternly, "I would have you not use the term 'what the devil' to me; and in regard to the past, I would have excused you for writing what you did to Lord Methwyn, had you not affected to blame the conduct that you prompted. I would have excused your telling that gentleman that I could not and would not pay his rent, if you had not always expressed to me your conviction that I could and would. In short, sir, I would have excused either story, had you not told the other; but having told both, I look upon you in the light which you may imagine. On these points I am satisfied, and therefore discussion upon them is useless; but there are one or two others into which it may be still my duty to inquire."

"As you please, sir," replied Mr. Williamson, finding that high tones would not do, and yet not choosing to sink too rapidly; "and yet I cannot help feeling a good deal grieved that our long acquaintance should thus end, because I have been compelled to do my duty. I think I must have known you now, colonel, some thirty—nay, some forty years," he added, seeing the old gentleman's eye flash at the name of duty, and willing to lead him away from the impressions produced by an ill-chosen word; for Mr. Williamson was a practical physiognomist, as far as reading accurately and rapidly the expressions as they passed over the countenances of those with whom he spoke went, and adapting his own words and conduct to the emotions he perceived there. "It is a long acquaintance, colonel, and I think you never had cause to find fault with me before; and in this business I am sure you cannot suspect me of any latent design of injuring the family, into which it is my strongest wish, and would be my greatest pride, that my son and heir should marry."

"What are your motives, sir," replied Colonel Adair, "I do not and cannot discover. Your actions in this instance speak for themselves. As, however, sir, you have again referred to my daughter, let me say, that where her happiness is concerned I shall never make any opposition. I have paid so dear for happiness of the same kind myself, that I value it too highly to trifle with that of my child. Your son has occasionally seen a good deal of her. What may be her feelings towards him I cannot tell, for I have not spoken to her on the subject; but to-morrow I will take an opportunity of doing so. Her wishes shall have full influence; but if I find that they do not lead her in

the way you suppose, I must desire the acquaintance to be dropped : and now, sir, I will wish you good morning, for my horse is at the door, and regimental business calls me hence."

The tone, the look, the manner, did not admit a word more, and the only consideration for Mr. Williamson was, whether he should sulk, or bully, or enact injured innocence. The latter expedient prevailed, and was chosen ; and exclaiming with a sigh, "Well, colonel ! well ! you will one day do me justice !" he took his hat and left the room. "We shall get matters brought round," he thought ; "the old colonel is a hasty man, but it is like a wood fire—his anger very hot, and very bright, and very soon over : and now for the post-office ; I wonder if they have sent me the newspapers ?" They had not ; and when he applied at the post, only one thick letter, written on thick paper, sealed with a large splashy seal, and containing evidently another sheet, was handed to him, with a demand upon his purse which made him give the writer to the devil. He was too cautious a man to open a letter in the streets, and he therefore waited till he had reached his own hotel, and his own room therein. There, however, he shut the door and broke the seal, when, to his surprise, horror, and astonishment, he read the following words :—

"Messrs. Strongthorpe, Steadygo, and Standfast present their compliments to Mr. Williamson, and beg to forward to him the inclosed from Lord Methwyn, and to inform him that, as his lordship is pleased to place his future law business in their hands, they will be obliged to him if he will cause to be prepared a clear statement of his account since the last settlement, in order to its speedy and final arrangement. Messrs. S., S., and S. also request that Mr. Williamson, as soon as he can make it convenient, to return to England, would have the goodness to hand over to them all leases, contracts, covenants, agreements, wills, testaments, marriage-settlements, papers, memoranda, accounts, statements, bills in chancery, deeds, papers, and documents of every kind, sort, and description whatsoever, belonging to Lord Methwyn, which he may happen to have in his care or custody at this present time."

"Ruin !" murmured Mr. Williamson, "ruin ! clear two thousand a-year out of pocket ;" and mechanically he opened the inclosure from Lord Methwyn. It contained but few words, and was to the following effect :—"Mr. Williamson having thought fit not only to act to a tenant of

Lord Methwyn in a far more severe manner than any directions authorised him to do, but also, in order to screen himself, having chosen to calumniate his employer, he cannot be surprised that Lord Methwyn is determined to remove his agency and law business from his hands. He is accordingly desired to render his accounts since June last, and to give over all papers he may possess of Lord Methwyn's to Messrs. Strongbotham, Steadygo, and Standfast, solicitors, No. —, Gray's Inn."

"That cursed old rascal has been my ruin," cried Mr. Williamson, "but I'll be revenged on him. He does not know how much I have him in my power. But I will make him pay for what he takes away now, or I will know the reason why. I won't wait a minute—I will go directly; but I had better answer these letters first, too;"—and down he sat to reply in a calm tone of professional plausibility to the antagonist lawyers, while to Lord Methwyn he answered in a very different manner, humbly assuring him that he had been misrepresented and traduced; that though, of course, he bowed humbly to his lordship's decision, yet, being taken quite by surprise, and engaged in Brussels in pursuing a matter of infinite consequence, he could not at the moment fulfil his lordship's wishes. In the meantime he declared that he had not a word to say against his lordship's resolution, and yet he believed that if allowed to justify himself, he could in short say a great deal against it.

Now, in truth, Mr. John Williamson, attorney-at-law, did not in the least imagine or believe that anything he could say would alter Lord Methwyn's decision. He had known the peer some twenty years, and he was a shrewd and observing man, so that he knew those parts of Lord Methwyn's character which had rubbed against himself in professional matters, as well as the peer did himself. He was well aware that his lordship was not a person to be moved by solicitations, deceived by unproved assertions, or taken in by affected contritions and apology. With Lord Methwyn he could neither bully, nor cajole, nor finesse. The only thing he had ever seen act upon his lordship as a sedative was time, and to time he determined to leave him, avoiding all further communication with Messrs. Strongbotham, Steadygo, and Standfast as he would have done with a pest-house, and providing diligently against the worst future that could possibly happen, by an active employment of the golden present.

CHAPTER XIX.

NEARLY about the same time that Mr. Williamson approached the door of Colonel Adair's dwelling, Adjutant Green walked up—or rather marched up—for his whole demeanour, step, carriage, countenance, was not only that of a military man, but of a military man in the actual exercise of his profession, determined to break the square opposed to him, or carry the scarcely practicable breach, or scale the well-defended wall—he marched up then to the door of the handsome house which Lady Mary Denham tenanted in Brussels, and bringing his left shoulder forward, rang at the bell. There was a carriage at the door, as if waiting for the ladies to go out, but Adjutant Green did not mind that. There was a speech lurking in his throat behind the '*velum pendulum palati*,' and there was determination in his countenance; and, as we have said, he marched up to the door, brought his left shoulder forward, and rang the bell. When a servant appeared, he first asked for Miss Adair, as her idea happened to be uppermost in his mind at the moment; but being told that she was out, he paused to revolve whom he should next demand to see, Lady Mary Denham or his own niece Louisa. He was going to speak about other people's business, however, and therefore Louisa was not the fit person; but ere he could decide, the servant brought the controversy in his mind to a close by repeating that Miss Adair had gone out to see sights with Lady Mary, but that Lady Pontypool was at home, though she too was going out directly. Lady Pontypool was the very person. He had heard her call Miss Adair her cousin Helen, and her dear child, and a great many other kindly names; he knew that she was very much loved and esteemed by everybody, and as there was nothing at all awful in my Aunt Pontypool, he begged to see her for two minutes.

There was nobody in the drawing-room, and Adjutant Green walked to the window with his sabre under his arm, and gazed out. The moment after there was the creaking of a pair of old lady's shoes, and turning round, he found himself in the presence of my Aunt Pontypool. Now,

Adjutant Green had a good deal to say, but when taken out of the regular routine of regimental business, with the simple exception of a few animated soul-stirring words on the field of battle, which he got heaven knows whence or how, if it were not from the depths of his own lion-like heart; he was anything but an eloquent man, as the reader is doubtless by this time fully aware. On the other hand, Lady Pontypool was one of those people who have in their own mind an explanation ready for everything that is said to them—dark or pellucid, conveyed in a hint or explained at length, they are sure to find a meaning in it right or wrong; and that not from any overweening vanity in their own powers of comprehension, but from a tender consideration for the feelings of others, preventing them from offering such an insult to any one's powers of narration as to ask for a further elucidation of an obscure tale. It may easily be conceived, therefore, that of all people on the earth two persons could hardly have been chosen less likely to understand each other than Adjutant Charles Green and the Dowager Lady Pontypool.

The lady pointed to a chair, and declared, that she was very happy to see Mr. Green, hoped that he was quite recovered, and asked when he had arrived at Brussels. He, on his part, sat down with his foraging-cap in his left hand, his right foot and leg extended, his left drawn under the chair, and his sabre still under his left arm. In this position, and with the line of his back forming an angle of forty-five with the upright back of the chair as he stooped forward to bring the organ of speech nearer to Lady Pontypool, from whom he had seated himself at a respectful distance, he proceeded to reply politely to her polite inquiries. He then added, that though he should certainly have come to offer his thanks for the kindness which had been shown him at Ghent, he had, on the present occasion, a little bit of business to speak of. As Lady Pontypool had no apprehensions of a proposal, she merely bowed her head with an approving smile, and he proceeded.

"I wished to speak to you, my lady," he said, "about that dear, pretty young lady, Miss Adair, who is so kind and gentle, my little Louisa says."

"She is indeed!" answered Lady Pontypool with affectionate warmth, "she is as amiable and sweet-tempered a young person as any in the world, and would do as

much good as any one, if she had but the means, poor girl."

"Ay! that's what I was thinking," replied Adjutant Green. "I was afraid that she and the old colonel were but poorly off, and that's what I call very hard; I don't see why that should be at all."

"No, nor I either, Mr. Green," replied Lady Pontypool in a sad tone; "but you know we must not arraign the inscrutable decrees of Providence." Adjutant Green remained puzzled, and Lady Pontypool went on. "I myself have been subjected to terrible vicissitudes in this state of being, but I try to bear my affliction with perfect resignation to the will of the Almighty, who knows what is best for me."

"He is commander-in-chief, madam," replied Adjutant Green, "and I know better than to grumble at his orders. Our duty is to obey, and I am sure the colonel knows better than to say a word; but if I understand you right, my lady, you meant to say that they had had losses—the colonel, I mean."

"Oh, sad losses indeed!" replied Lady Pontypool; "he lost his wife, poor thing, some four or five years ago; a sweet creature she was, and he mourned for her very much, though she cost him his fortune, poor man."

"Ay, indeed!" cried Green, as if a new light was breaking upon him, "so that was it! Why, you see, my lady, I thought it was very strange-like, and just this morning I heard that old scoundrel Williamson talking in a very scoundrelly way, it struck me, to that young scoundrel his son. I began to suspect something wrong, do you see, my Lady Pontypool, for I knew all about the matter long ago, and I thought it very likely that the old rascal—that is Williamson—might be coggng to cheat the good colonel and his daughter; do you understand, my lady?"

"Oh, quite well, quite well," replied Lady Pontypool. "He is, I believe, a very bad man indeed, that Williamson—at least I have heard Charles say so—and I dare say he is capable of cheating anybody; I am sure he looks it; but I wonder how to prevent it, for I am sure I would do anything I could to put poor Helen more at her ease, for she is a dear, sweet girl indeed."

"Why, as to the matter of putting her more at her ease, poor young lady," replied he, "here's her father's first-cousin, Lord Adair, in this very city; I saw him and his

son yesterday. He's running over with riches, they tell me, and I don't see why——"

He paused and hesitated, and Lady Pontypool chimed in. "I am sure if I could do anything I would, Mr. Green, and I am very much obliged to you for speaking to me about it. Lord Adair is a relation of mine and of Mary's too, and if you thought I could do anything, and would only tell me how to set about it——"

"Why, my lady, I would go and see how the land lies," answered he. "I would go and ask, you know! If all's right, why, well, no harm's done; but your ladyship knows much better about the matter than I do. You can judge yourself; I only think, why, here's the one rolling in riches, and the other in poverty—that's all."

"Oh, I'll go—I have no objection to go," said Lady Pontypool, "I'll go this minute, but only do tell me, Mr. Green, what would you have me say."

"Why, ma'am," replied he, "why, really I don't know. Why, I'd just say to him, 'If you're a gentleman, as I take you to be, behave as such, and act accordingly.'"

"So I will, I declare," said Lady Pontypool, plucking up courage at the words put into her mouth. "So I will, I declare—but tell me, Mr. Green, whereabouts my cousin Adair lives, and I will go directly, for the sooner a disagreeable thing is over the better. The carriage is at the door, and I have nothing else to do."

Adjutant Green, letting his sabre drop by his side, took a pen and ink, and in a good clerk-like hand, which none could write better than himself, he put down the address. He then brought his right shoulder forward, saluted Lady Pontypool, forced the pass between a sofa-table, two chaise-longues, and a china-jar, and effected his retreat by the door in a very soldier-like and masterly manner, feeling that in the interview just over he had achieved a feat as gallant and daring as that of Norman Ramsay at Fuentes d'Onoro.

In the meanwhile, Lady Pontypool proceeded to her carriage, and her carriage proceeded in search of Lord Adair, turning through a number of small streets, till at length it stopped at the door of a house between a petty restaurant and a lace-shop. Lady Pontypool thought of her cousin's princely fortune, and looked up at the dwelling, which was neither princely nor gentlemanly; but the bell being rung, and a little sickly-looking, dirty girl having run out from the ground floor, which was in-

habited by bootmakers, and from which issued forth a dull thumping of leather and a smell of tan, Lady Pontypool was told that there was a Milor lodging on the first floor, and that she would find a bell. She accordingly mounted the stairs, followed by a footman; and there, at the first landing-place, she certainly did find a long thick cord, with a knot at the end thereof, which, on being pulled, produced a sound within the room beyond, not unlike that of the bell wherewith one wether is generally tormented in every flock of sheep. A French man-servant opened the door, and in answer to her inquiries, informed her that Lord Adair was within, and she was accordingly ushered into his presence.

Lady Pontypool had not seen Lord Adair for many years; and when she had seen him, he was a tall, thin, good-looking man, of forty-five or fifty, with a narrow, keen-looking countenance, having but little contour in it; but at the same time, with fine dark eyes enough, good teeth, and well-formed features. She could hardly have recognised the person before her, when she entered the little salon in which he was sitting. He was approaching the age of seventy, but his old age was no way green. His cheeks were pale, and somewhat withered, and his thin white hair fell flat and lanky over his forehead and ears. His eyes were still fine, but the good teeth were gone, and the sharp and prominent nose had been left standing alone, from the desertion of the cheeks by which it had at one time been kept in countenance. In point of dress, his lordship was below his station. He had a large white muslin cravat bound round his neck in manifold folds, making the throat look somewhat thicker than the head which surmounted it: and to this he added a well-cut blue coat, rather old, but still good; and a yellow waistcoat, which had been often washed. Nevertheless, no one could mistake him for anything but a gentleman by birth and education; and when he saw Lady Pontypool he laid down his pen, closed a folio book of figures to which he had been adding, and led the good old lady to a chair with the suavity and grace of days gone by. He recollected her immediately, though the attempt at announcing her name made by his French servant only served to shadow her identity in mystery.

The conversation was soon begun under such circumstances, and Lord Adair apologised for not having waited upon Lady Pontypool when he was last in London; "But,

to tell the truth," he said, "since my poor wife's death, I have given up all society; and, indeed, having no one to look after my affairs but myself, I find plenty to do, and the necessity of proper economy in my expenses compels me to limit very much my intercourse with the world."

"But, my good lord and cousin," replied Lady Pontypool, "I always thought you were very happily situated in point of fortune—I thought you were rich."

"Rich!" cried he, "Oh no, no, indeed, you are quite mistaken! and, besides, there are so many expenses which are not apparent to the eye of the general world, that even were I rich—which Heaven knows I am not—I should find means of spending all that I ought to spend, and more too, a great deal."

"Indeed!" said Lady Pontypool, her hopes in Helen's favour beginning to cool. "I thought, as your family was so small, that you had plenty of money to spare, my lord!"

"Money to spare!" cried he with a laugh, "good Lady Pontypool, how could you dream of such a thing? you forget my son, a young man now of two-and-twenty. He must have this thing, he must have that; he must have his servant (though I am sure one servant could do very well for him and me); he must have his horse—not that I mean to say he is not a very good boy—a very good boy indeed; and his only passion is running about the country: but even travelling in diligence and stage coaches is very expensive. He costs me full six hundred a-year, one way or another, and I cannot live for much less myself."

"Six hundred a-year, my dear cousin!" cried Lady Pontypool, "when I know you have upwards of forty thousand per annum yourself. Is it not true?"

"Forty thousand per annum!" cried the peer, "not so much, not so much; I am sure I have not near forty thousand per annum—no, not near, all deductions made."

Now, good Lady Pontypool was in no shape or way a woman of the world; but, nevertheless, she had heard more than once of her worthy cousin's avarice, and his words were so very little like truth, that even she saw the miser peeping through his thin disguise, and her spirit was aroused to fight the battles of poor Helen Adair. She therefore replied, "Well, well, my good lord, we will not talk of a thousand or two, but it is clear to me that you have a great deal more than you want, and I am come to speak to you about a young relation, who has a great deal

less than she ought. Do you know that Helen Adair, the daughter of your cousin, the colonel, is now living with my niece Mary Denham, and that she and her father both are not in the situation they ought to be, if right and justice had been done? them?"

Lord Adair turned first as white as a piece of Coleraine linen, then as red as a chimney-pot, and then as brown as brown holland. He stared at Lady Pontypool—he gasped; and she, knowing that there are many men who are highly indignant at having poor relations, was angry with him in her turn, and went on in a way that did not at all tend to calm or tranquillize him. "You know very well, my lord," she continued, "that the colonel ought to have had the India fortune, while you had the family estates; I know all that story as well as you do yourself, and therefore the least you can do now is to come forward and put your relatives at their ease—so I think, and there are other people that think so too."

Lord Adair rubbed his spectacles upon his sleeve, and then demanded in a low tone, "And pray, Lady Pontypool, what persons do you allude to—I mean who was it prompted you to honour me with this visit, and to speak in these terms? Was it Colonel Adair himself, or his daughter, or who?"

"It was neither," replied the old lady, "for they know nothing about it; but it was some one who seems to understand the whole matter too;" and for the first time she began to wonder how Adjutant Green did understand the whole so well—"it was no other than Adjutant Green of the —— dragoons."

Lord Adair started up with such violence that he overthrew the chair behind him, which broke its own back in the fall; and though with inveterate habit more strong than Nature herself, he picked up the piece of furniture, and re-adjusted the fractured parts as skilfully as if he had been all his life a surgeon to old mahogany; yet the moment he had done, agitation again took possession of him, and he ended his interrupted start by walking vehemently up and down the room.

At length, pausing opposite to Lady Pontypool, he asked her in a tone less agitated than his manner, but shaken and low nevertheless, "Pray, madam, what did he say?"

"Why, my lord," she replied, "he said that if you were a gentleman, as every one knows you are, you would show yourself one on the present occasion."

There was a sufficient smack of Adjutant Green left in Lady Pontypool's version of his speech to show Lord Adair whence it came ; and, again very much agitated, he paced the room, till prudence began to get the better of surprise, and sitting down he remained for a moment or two silent, while Lady Pontypool, having exhausted her eloquence, did the wisest thing she ever had done in her life, and remained silent also.

"Well, madam," he said at length, "this is an extraordinary application after such a length of time. Let me know what you wish me to do?"

Now Lady Pontypool had not exactly considered that question, and like many a much more capricious person than her own good self, she did not exactly know what she wished. "Why," she said at length, "why, I think you had better see the colonel yourself, my lord."

"That I cannot do, madam," he replied, "for if I willingly see him I lose the whole property at once—so you see that's impossible—it would be giving it up outright!"

"Well, then, my lord, said Lady Pontypool, a bright thought striking her, "the prohibition does not affect your son. Let him see Colonel Adair, and speak upon the business."

"My son—my son—" said Lord Adair, hesitating—"no my son does not know anything of—of—business—and I am sure I do not know how to——"

"Well, but my lord," cried Lady Pontypool, her bright thought brightening into one of her brightest plans, "well, but my lord, suppose that your son were to see Miss Adair. I declare that is the best scheme after all—for Helen is one of the most beautiful girls that you can conceive, and if they were to fall in love with one another, which is very likely, how delightful that would be!—I am sure that you would like your son to marry."

"Certainly," replied Lord Adair ; and after a moment's thought, during which the expense of weddings, and the necessary settlements upon his son, balanced themselves against a thousand other considerations, he added, "certainly, I have always wished him to marry for the sake of keeping up the family, and I dare say this Miss Adair is a good manager too, being brought up on but little ; and then too, it will set the other affair at rest as you say—indeed, I think it not a bad plan, Lady Pontypool," and he rubbed his hands while meditating its advantages ; but then he added, "I think, however, it will be as well to

suspend all discussion, and not to say a word to my son about the matter, but just to let him meet his fair cousin in society, and we may try quietly to bring about a match between them, without mentioning the India fortune at all."

"Oh, certainly, certainly," replied Lady Pontypool, delighted with her own plan and its success so far; but at the same time, desirous of displaying what knowledge of human nature she possessed, she added, "we had better not mention such a thing as a match even to either party, for I have always remarked, that that is the very way to prevent such a thing from proceeding. Now, there is Charles Lacy, who will undoubtedly marry Mary—if I had not taken the greatest pains to prevent it being talked of to either the one or the other it would have all been spoiled."

Lord Adair agreed with her in these views perfectly, and he farther added, that he expected the return of his son every moment, so that if Lady Pontypool would stay a few minutes he could be introduced to her at once. To this she readily consented, determined in her own mind to bring about the first meeting between Helen and her young relative as speedily as possible. She waited then very anxiously for the appearance of young Henry Adair, longing to see whether his personal appearance would afford a good foundation for that love which she had pre-resolved that Helen should conceive for him. She was not long kept in suspense, for the young man was already behind the time at which he had promised to re-join his father, and in a few minutes a hasty step running up the stairs, and a loud ringing at the bell, spoke his arrival. The next moment he entered the room, and Lady Pontypool was satisfied. He was a slight young man, not very tall, but still above the middle height, very well and very gracefully formed, and, as was the case with all his family, bearing gentleman written in legible characters upon his brow. His face was peculiarly handsome, his eyes large and dark, the rest of his features small, his chin rounded, and, if anything, a little too projecting, his brow broad and noble, and the dark clustering black hair flowing round it in soft massy curls. His complexion was brown and rather pale, and his beard was strongly marked for one so young, while his whiskers, dark and curling, had been suffered to grow, though to no immoderate length. He paused when he saw Lady Pontypool, but then again advanced to the table, and leaning his

bent knuckles upon it, with his person gracefully inclined, he turned his dark lustrous eyes upon his father for a moment in silence, with a look of thoughtful affection, while, upon the shrunk and sharp features of the old peer rested an expression of proud satisfaction, which explained sufficiently to Lady Pontypool the silence which he kept also.

"I have come back, sir, if you want me," said the son at length: "I shall remain in the next room till you are ready."

"No, no, Harry!" said his father; "you must stay here. This is a relation of ours, kindly come to visit me. This is Lady Pontypool. Lady Pontypool, permit me to introduce you to my son Henry."

The good lady gave him her hand, expressing how much pleasure she had in seeing him, and the young man, taking a seat beside her, entered at once into conversation, with considerable powers of language, but with an original and peculiar train of ideas, expressed without the least apparent consciousness of singularity, but as if there was a necessity of their being spoken, which he himself had no power to resist.

Lord Adair spoke not, but looked on, proud and pleased; and Lady Pontypool, who did not understand one half, thought it all very odd but very clever, and ended by asking her young cousin to dinner on the following day, which invitation he accepted, and then handed her to her carriage.

CHAPTER XX.

AND now, while Lady Pontypool returned home, proud and well-pleased with all the little arrangements she had made, and perfectly sure that Helen would fall in love with Henry Adair the moment she beheld him, that gentleman sat waiting for his father, who occupied the first five minutes after Lady Pontypool's departure, in preparations to go out. Henry Adair looked round the small room, gazed upon the large folio of accounts, thought of all that should be, in his father's situation, and drew a deep sigh. "It is a disease," he thought, "it is a disease, and, unhappily, one for which there is no cure." But Henry Adair's love for his father was very great, and though he saw and felt most painfully the avarice of the miser, yet he never forgot that the miser was his father, and a father who loved him even better than his gold. For himself, he was contented with very little, and he was well pleased so far to make a sacrifice to his father's feelings, as never to strive for the means of keeping up those expenses which might well become the son of a peer; but still he would not relinquish that which became a gentleman of moderate fortune, and thus the line of agreement was drawn between the father and the son. Yet never could Henry Adair think of his father without bitter regret, to behold qualities which might have secured respect and esteem, if they could not have gained high reverence and excited strong admiration, lost in the one sad decrepit passion which benumbed every better feeling.

In about five minutes after Lady Pontypool had left the house, Lord Adair rejoined his son with his hat in his hand; and was in the act of listening to an account of a very pleasant ride down through the little village of Ixelles, which Henry proposed for their morning's excursion, when a loud ringing at the bell announced some new visitor. Ere Lord Adair could give orders to say he was engaged, the servant who had been waiting to give his master exit, opened the door and announced Mr. Williamson. Lord Adair laid his hat and stick upon the

table, less annoyed at the interruption than the son, and after welcoming Mr. Williamson with a degree of proud familiarity, he said, "Well, Harry, you had better go and take your ride alone, for I have a good deal of business to transact with our friend here."

Lord Adair heard the door close and the clatter of the horse's hoofs on the pavement before he opened his lips on the business to which he had alluded, but when his son was certainly gone, he exclaimed, "Now sit down, Williamson, sit down! Something very extraordinary has happened to-day. Lady Pontypool has been here!"

"The devil she has!" cried the lawyer. "I thought as much. I thought there was some mischief brewing by the impertinent questions she asked me yesterday. But tell me, my lord, who has been prompting her, and how much does she know?"

"Why, Green has been prompting her; Charles Green, an ungrateful scoundrel! and as to how much she knows, I am sure I cannot well tell. She seemed to know a great deal; but of course she did not speak out fully. She gave a great many hints and innuendoes, and in fact said, she knew as much about the matter as I did myself. She said, too, that I knew very well the India fortune should have gone to my cousin Charles, and a great deal more in that strain."

Williamson paused for a moment or too, and then replied, "That might all be done to cover ignorance. She is deep, my lord! devilish deep, that old woman!" he continued; for cunning people always believe persons whose characters puzzle them, to be actuated by the same class of motives as themselves. "You should have pumped her, and fished out what she really knew—perhaps not much, after all!"

"But I am not so good either at pumping or fishing, as you call it," replied Lord Adair, a slight tone of scorn mingling with his repetition of the lawyer's terms.

"I doubt though that she knows much, after all," reiterated the lawyer; "for she would have bolted it out, depend upon it, in order to frighten you to do what she wanted; and of course she did not come here without an object, whatever it was?"

"As far as I could understand," replied Lord Adair, "her object was neither more nor less than to induce me to give up the property, or at least part of it, to my cousin Charles. But, to tell the truth, I was so taken by sur-

prise, and confused on the occasion, that I neither knew what to answer, nor was prepared to examine minutely what she had discovered, or what she wanted. All that I could think of was to put the whole discussion off till I could speak with you about it."

"Quite right! quite right!" said the lawyer; "you are always quite right, my lord; and after all, what can Green do? nothing at all! There is nothing but his bare oath, and he may swear till he is black in the face, it will not conjure sixpence out of your pocket. Very disagreeable, no doubt; but he can do nothing. There is his single oath against our two oaths,—and which is the best, I should ask?"

"Ay, but I should not like to swear," replied the peer. "No, I should not like to swear at all, Williamson. Besides, suppose that other fellow were to turn up?"

"He is as dead as a herring, my lord!" replied Williamson; "I spoke with the sergeant himself, who reported him killed. As I told you before, he was shot through the head in the Peninsula; but even if he were alive, that would be nothing you know, my lord:" he added, approaching the peer, and speaking in a low but emphatic voice, "they must produce it; they must produce it before they could make out a case which the court would even hear. Let them produce it if they can! ha, ha, ha!" and he laughed loud and triumphantly.

Lord Adair, however, who valued his reputation at a higher rate than Mr. Williamson could do, did not seem quite satisfied with his worthy friend's consolations. "Do you know," he said, "Williamson, I often wish I had never done it; it would have been a terrible loss! a great loss, indeed—four-and-twenty thousand pounds per annum, at least! but yet, sometimes I wish I had not done it."

"Well, my lord!" replied Williamson, somewhat sulkily, "it is no business of mine, you know."

"No business of yours, sir?" answered the peer, in a sharp tone; "why you proposed it to me yourself—you arranged the whole affair, and burnt it yourself."

"Well, my lord," rejoined the lawyer, while a sly and meaning smile stole over his coarse features, "the matter is very easily remedied if your lordship pleases; you have nothing to do but to give up the property. That is what I meant by saying, 'it is no business of mine.' You can give up the property and pay the back-rents, and say it was all a mistake; and if you think any compensation neces-

sary for having kept it so long, you can give twenty or thirty thousand over."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" cried the peer; "do you think I am mad, or drivelling? But I'll tell you what, Williamson—old Lady Pontypool—whom I never thought so clever a woman as she turns out—has proposed a plan which will remove all discomforts, and set matters straight again. I have resolved to agree to it, and so to have my heart at ease for the rest of my life, and to be no longer tormented with fears and anxieties, or uncomfortable recollections. For more than twenty years I have not known a moment's real peace of mind, Williamson!"

"But what does the old woman propose then?" demanded the lawyer, eagerly; "I thought you said, my lord, that she wished you to give back the India property as far as you could make out: you told me so not a minute ago."

"I did so," answered Lord Adair, "because it was about that she talked at first; and I should of course have gone on to find out fully what she did mean if she had not suddenly made a proposal which did away all difficulties, and opened a clear and straightforward way of settling the matter for ever."

"And pray what may this miraculous way be?" demanded the lawyer, not a little anxious to hear—for the reader must have already perceived that the attorney had a certain hold of the old peer, which he would have been very unwilling to lose by the intervention of Lady Pontypool, or any other intervention whatsoever; especially at moment when the goodly agency of Lord Methwyn's estates—the comfortable crumbs of his law business, and the sundry perquisites and conveniences thence to be drawn—had all slipped from his grasp, melting down at once like a snow-ball in the fire.

"I'll tell you, Williamson!" rejoined the peer, putting on his spectacles with a satisfied look; "Lady Pontypool proposed that my son, Henry, should end the whole matter by marrying the daughter of my cousin Charles Adair."

Mr. Williamson sat for a moment with his mouth open, in horror, astonishment, and apprehension; and as soon as he had recovered his speech that mouth had nearly given utterance to the words, "the mischief-making old witch!" He had sufficient command over himself, however, to stop short at the definite article; and thus, for a moment or

two, "the!" stood alone, for the first time in its life, as a regular interjection. "Well, my lord, I must say she's a cool hand to propose to your lordship to marry your son, with his splendid prospects, to a girl without a sixpence—without a brass farthing! Why, my lord, you would have to pay for her wedding-clothes! You did not surely consent to that?"

"Indeed I did," replied the peer, in a tone of determination which made the lawyer's countenance fall; "and I will tell you more, Williamson; I shall not go back from my resolution."

"Just as your lordship pleases," replied the lawyer; "but, I wish you would let me reason the matter with you for one moment. Only hear what I have to say against this scheme."

"Oh, I will hear anything you like," answered Lord Adair, in that sort of tone which a man uses when he is prepared to resist every argument, right or wrong; "I am quite willing to hear all that can be said against it, or for it."

"Well then, my lord," continued the lawyer, addressing his arguments with the skill acquired by habitual dealing with men's weaknesses, to the peculiar passion which he knew to predominate in the peer's nature, "it does seem to me a very strange, and even an impudent proposal of this old lady! Why, here a handsome young man like your son, the only child of a peer of large fortune, very clever, and agreeable to women, might expect any day, when he chose to marry, a fortune of six or seven thousand a-year with his wife instead of nothing at all. There is Miss Simcox, the banker's daughter, with at least half a million, and Miss Brown, the great contractor's only child, with more, both handsome girls, well-bred, and educated, would only be too proud and happy to marry your son; while I could point out a dozen of heiresses in the higher classes, with less fortunes perhaps, but better blood, who would be glad enough to secure the coronet, and a handsome husband into the bargain."

"And then we offend Lady Pontypool, and have all this story blazed all over the world, with Green's oath to the truth of it!" replied the peer; "and what would be the consequences of that? why, I will tell you, Williamson; if my son heard it but whispered that such a thing was the case, I should never see his face again as long as I lived; and all your fine schemes for marrying him to an

heiress would go to nought. Besides, man—I have heard him declare that he would 'never marry any woman who possessed more than five hundred a-year, for he vows that he never beheld one who did, that was not suspicious, or conceited, or purseproud: and let me tell you, Henry is a young man to keep his word where he has made up his mind."

Mr. Williamson well knew that he was so, but as it was not his policy to admit it, he laughed at the idea, and then bade Lord Adair only wait till Henry was in love, and then he would see, that, fortune or no fortune, he would marry. "At all events," he continued, "don't you, my lord, hurry him on to marry a girl without a sixpence, when there are a great many whom he may like, and who are better off."

"Ay! Williamson," replied the peer, "but I cannot consider this girl as without a sixpence, when I know all that I do know; and I am resolved to put it out of anybody's power to ruin me with chancery suits, or kill me by incessant agitation."

"Then I suppose you intend to give the whole India fortune back, when your son marries, as the wedding portion!" said Williamson with a sneer.

"No, no—not all, not all!" cried the peer. "I intend of course to give my son sufficient to keep up his rank in society when he is married—and they will have all at my death. It is not for my own sake, Williamson, that I am saving. I am now verging towards seventy, and it must soon be his; but we will try him first with a little, that he may know how to manage more when he gets it. But, at all events, I have determined not to risk all I have got by trying to get more, and make him marry heiresses, and all that. No, no! he shall marry her, if he and she can agree upon it, as certain as I am alive."

Williamson saw that there was no use of further opposition, and he only remained a few minutes longer with the peer in order to prevent his departure from seeming abrupt and hasty. He did, indeed, contemplate for a moment or two the risk of bringing things to an open rupture with Lord Adair, and threatening to divulge all he knew of some important secrets, if the plan of marrying Henry Adair to his fair cousin were pursued. He was naturally bold and harsh, loving collisions and bullyings, and well practised in domineering over all whom fortune cast into his power; but a brief space given to thought showed him that such conduct might only hurry a more disagreeable

consummation than that which he anticipated, and induce the peer himself to take the initiative in disclosures which would be as dangerous to Mr. Williamson as any one. He therefore determined to rest upon other plans, though of course his game was complicated and deranged by the moves that had been made without him; and after having held a rambling and somewhat absent conversation with the peer for five minutes longer, upon other matters of ordinary business, he took his hat and his leave, and walked out of the house. With his thumb-nail pressed against his under-lip, he descended the stone stairs to the dirty little entrance-passage below, and there he gave vent for one instant to the passion which had been agitating him for the last half-hour, by stamping his foot upon the ground, and exclaiming, "This is the devil!"

CHAPTER XXI.

At six o'clock on the day which followed that whereof we spoke in the last chapter, Lady Mary, Lady Pontypool, and Miss Adair were assembled in the salon of Lady Mary's house ; and as one, two, and three minutes passed, Major Kennedy, Captain Lacy, and General P —, were added to the party.

"I am sorry, dear Helen, that your father cannot be here to-day," said Lady Pontypool ; "I have invited a young friend whom I should like to introduce to him."

"I am afraid I am the unfortunate cause 'of Colonel Adair's absence," said General P — ; "I was obliged to request him to superintend some very important military arrangements, which no one, I was confident, could conduct so well. We were old companions, your father and I, my dear young lady," he added, with a frank nod to Helen, who had been listening with a raised colour to the implied eulogium on her father.

Several fresh visitors were added to the party, and Lacy had taken his seat by Helen's side, to hold with her one of those low and happy conversations, which sometimes chequer the dull pre-dinner half-hour with light, when the servant announced, "Mr. Adair !" and Helen's eyes were instantly raised with a look of surprise.

Young Adair entered with his colour rather raised, for with all his singularities he was not a little shy ; but his extremely handsome person did not appear the worse ; nor his dark eyes less bright for the flush upon his cheek ; and the look of almost every one in the room was upon him. Not so, however, Lacy ; his eyes were bent upon Helen Adair, over whose countenance spread a sudden paleness which surprised and alarmed him ; "Good God, Helen ! what is the matter ?" he asked in a low tone.

"Nothing, nothing !" she answered, "do not ask me now—nothing, Charles, indeed ! I will tell you afterwards ;" and ere she could add more, Lady Pontypool, who had risen to welcome the stranger, and had introduced him to Lady Mary Denham, brought him towards Helen herself. Lacy's surprise was not destined to be

diminished by their introduction to each other; for no sooner did Henry Adair set his eyes upon Helen than he drew a deep breath, as if suddenly struck by some overpowering emotion—coloured over brow and temples like a bashful girl—and then again turned as pale as ashes. Helen, however, had now lost her paleness, and her cheek was glowing with a painful blush; while Lady Pontypool, who saw nothing of all this, or if she did see it, attributed it to anything that she pleased except the right cause, introduced the two cousins to each other in a tone of gay good humour. Helen merely bowed her head gently, and he on his part, after having taken a step forward, with a quivering lip, as if about to speak, suddenly seemed overpowered again, drew back, and retreating to the other side of the room, apparently looked out of the window.

Lacy kept his seat in the meantime beside Helen Adair, and though she was evidently agitated in no slight degree, by a meeting with a young and very handsome man, Charles Lacy was too sure of the candid simplicity of the heart he had won to feel the least touch of jealousy, or to suspect even for a moment that that heart might ever have felt for another those sensations which he proudly believed he had awakened for the first time. He saw that she was still agitated and uneasy even after her cousin was gone; and feeling with the nice tact of a gentlemanly mind, that the knowledge of having shown embarrassment before him, without an opportunity of explaining it, might prolong the very embarrassment she suffered, he went on to speak as if nothing had happened, saying, "Your young cousin did not see me, or has forgotten me."

"Then you have seen him before, too!" cried Helen, surprised.

"Oh, yes, often," replied Lacy; "I saw him frequently in Paris last year. He is a very excellent as well as a very talented young man, I hear."

"Indeed!" said Helen; "but surely he is very eccentric, is he not?"

"Yes! oh, yes!" replied Lacy, decidedly, "he bears that character generally; but I have heard and believe that his eccentricities always take amiable forms, though they go into excesses. His singularities are all the fruits of wild and unrestrained enthusiasm."

Helen looked up in his face with a smile that meant many things. "Well," she said at length, "I suppose

his eccentricities must be amiable, for I am sure I owe them much."

"Indeed!" said Lacy; "then there is a mystery, Helen; you will make me curious in despite of myself—curious to know how either he or his eccentricities can have conferred any benefit on you."

Helen looked down, and the colour ran quickly over her cheek again, but it was only from a momentary timidity; for the next instant she raised her eyes once more—her beautiful hazel eyes, with that never-to-be-mistaken tender light of love beaming out from them, and she answered, "If it had not been for one of his eccentricities I should have never known you, Charles."

Dinner was announced, and the half-uttered exclamation stood upon Lacy's lips. His attachment to Helen Adair, however, had by this time become apparent to all persons who beheld them much together, except two—Lady Pontypool and Colonel Adair. The first was blind to it from a peculiar conformation of the moral eye, which impeded her seeing anything in the same manner that other people saw it; and the second was blind from that inevitable necessity which prevents all fathers from perceiving when their children are falling in love; but he had some excuse, for he had been able to see but very little of his daughter since she came to Brussels. However, Lacy's attachment was so well known, and had gradually become so openly displayed, that he did not think it at all necessary to give up his seat beside Helen to any one; and consequently, in the arrangements of the dinner-table, he found himself seated beside her. Henry Adair was on the other side a little farther up, and the moment his eyes rested upon Lacy, the light of recognition—ay, and of pleased recognition too—beamed up in them with a bright and cheerful smile. It seemed as if there were something in the sight of Charles Lacy which put him at his ease, removing that painful embarrassment under which he had evidently continued to labour till he took his seat at the dinner-table. Lacy had been looking another way, but the moment he turned his eyes Henry Adair bowed, and the other replied with a smile, "I thought you had forgotten me, Adair."

"Oh, no!" answered the other, "that I could never do, Captain Lacy, since the pleasure of seeing you every now and then was the only thing that made Paris tolerable to me last winter."

"It is certainly a place I very much dislike," replied Lacy.

"Then in the name of heaven why did you stay in it?" demanded the other; "you had nothing to keep you there—you were as free to come and go as the quick-winged swallow or the unconstrained wind; while, on the contrary, I was tied to that great, dull capital with its nucleus of palaces and its oceans of lanes and dirty alleys, its memories of slaughter and its atmosphere of vice, by the presence of my father, who, as you know, would be lonely enough if I left him long or often."

By the time he had concluded, Henry Adair had contrived to draw the eyes of most of those who were strangers to him upon himself; but the presence of Lacy had now so far relieved him, that though he sunk back into himself whenever he found that he was verging into declamation, yet he soon recovered, and carried on the conversation with a good deal of spirit with different people around him.

Thus passed the dinner; and, after it was over, the gentlemen soon rejoined the ladies in the salon. It cannot be denied that Lacy was anxious to gain from Helen some explanation of what he had remarked before dinner; to learn where and how she had first met her cousin, and what influence he could have exerted on her acquaintance with himself. It was one of those evenings, however, which are destined for the purpose of preventing any one from having any private conversation with another. Various people dropped in, causing moving of chairs, and discomposing arrangements; and at the only moment when Lacy saw an opportunity of obtaining the explanation he wished, a general officer who had just entered called him into the other room, and kept him in a long and interesting conversation, concerning the events which were now rapidly approaching. It was the fourteenth day of June, and his friend informed him, that tidings had reached Brussels that night of the French having driven the Prussian outposts across the Sambre. There was even a report, he said, that they had entered Charleroi; but this was not believed; and it was very generally supposed that the demonstrations on that side were only intended to mask Napoleon's real intention of advancing upon Brussels by the other road. This was the cause why the Duke of Wellington remained still unmoved, watching for any events which might betray the true plan of the enemy. "But at

all events," the general went on, "it was clear, that ere long some far more active measures would be taken."

The matter was too interesting to be spoken of lightly, so that the conversation lasted for several minutes; and when he returned, Lacy found that Henry Adair occupied the seat by Helen's side. Lacy could still afford to let him do so without feeling jealous; but some other person interposed to relieve Helen, by asking her to sing. She complied at once, and Lacy gained one side of the piano, while Henry Adair hung over her on the other. He was, it seems, passionately fond of music, and it produced upon him impressions which could not be controlled, deepening in his bosom all those powerful feelings and wild enthusiasms, which were, under even ordinary circumstances, but too strong. Helen sang sweetly and skilfully, though with no very great execution; but her voice was peculiarly soft and musical; and as he stood beside her, and hung over her, he lost himself in the sounds—his eyes sparkled, his features became more and more animated; and when she ended, his language was all poetry, and admiration, and enthusiasm.

There is no denying that Lacy was a little annoyed; but not half so much as Helen herself, who might have found some difficulty in extricating herself from an unpleasant situation, had not Mary Denham, whose wise kindness was never long in discovering when anything disturbed her friends, come forward, and called Henry Adair away upon some ready excuse. The evening, however, was soon over. There was more music, and more conversation; but Henry Adair could hear no music that he thought like that of his cousin, and Lacy could not obtain the conversation that he wished for. At length the rooms began to grow thin; and Lacy, whose hours of pleasure were stolen from graver things, was forced to take his leave.

"When shall we see you? to-morrow, Charles?" asked Lady Mary in a low tone, as he wished her good-night.

"I am afraid it will be late," he answered, "for I have a good deal of duty to do; but I will dine with you if you dine alone, and will come a little before." She nodded, and he left her; while Henry Adair, who had preceded him in his departure, walked home, full of many musings. His father had already retired to rest; and proceeding to his own chamber, he sent his servant away, and sat down to think; but thought was all in confusion; love had set his seal upon the power of thinking; and all that meditation

produced was the consciousness that he did love. Wisely and carefully his father had abstained from endeavouring to point his affections towards Helen; for he knew his son well enough to be aware that all his acts must spring from the feelings of his own heart, and that the least attempt to bias him would but make him fly off, like a tennis-ball at the rebound, in quite a different direction. He had, therefore, merely told his son that he would meet his cousin, Miss Adair, at Lady Mary Denham's, informing him at the same time, that the will under which he inherited his property prevented him from meeting, willingly, Colonel Adair or any of his family.

"I would have thrown such a will in the fire!" thought his son; but the tenderness he felt for his father kept him silent; and he proceeded to ask who Lady Mary Denham was. His father had replied briefly; and informed him at the same time, that she was engaged to her cousin, Captain Lacy, whom he already knew. Henry Adair had thought no more about the matter at the time; but now he thought of it deeply. "Engaged to Lady Mary Denham!" he said, as he turned in his mind the conduct of Lacy towards his cousin—"engaged to Lady Mary Denham! and yet all his attention seemed to be taken up with that enchanting girl! To think of her being my cousin, too! that very cousin in whom I have felt such an interest! I dare say she must be like her mother, for I can well believe that her father—that any man, would sacrifice fortune, ay, a world itself, for such a being as that. But if Lacy loves her—then I am miserable indeed, for who would prefer me to him? Yet, perhaps, after all, it may be that he, engaged to his cousin, and feeling as if he were in fact already married, pays attention to her fair guest. But I will bring my doubts to an end at once—I will go to-morrow and ascertain whether I am to be wretched or happy through life!"

With such thoughts he went to bed, but certainly did not sleep, for his was one of those temperaments in which sleep like a timid bird is scared away by the least stir of any of the things around it. Early the next morning he was up, and was down in the saloon long before his father appeared. When the peer came at length, and breakfast was served, Henry fixed his large dark eyes upon him, with that sort of tender and thoughtful interest with which he generally looked upon his father, fearing that in the present instance what he had determined to say and do might give his father pain.

"Do you know, sir," he said at length, "that I have fallen in love?"

"Well, my dear boy," answered Lord Adair, calmly, "that is no very unnatural thing!"

"Well then, sir," he added, "as a consequence, I am now as anxious to marry as I used formerly to be averse to it."

"That is very natural too, my dear Henry," replied his father; "and if the marriage be such as I can approve of, you may depend upon my doing all I can to make you happy."

"But that is the question," answered Henry Adair, "whether you will approve or not. In the first place, I can expect no fortune with the wife I propose to marry."

"Humph!" said Lord Adair, unable, notwithstanding every counterbalancing consideration, to get quite rid of his dislike to the want of wealth; "that is bad, Henry: but let me hear more; who is the lady?"

"It is no other, sir, than the daughter of your cousin, Colonel Adair," replied his son; "and as it is in consequence of our having an inordinate fortune that she has none, I think that you cannot object to a want on her part, by which we benefit, and which we have quite sufficient to supply."

"But have you any chance of winning her?" demanded his father, whose mind was relieved by this avowal of the person, as he had not expected so sudden an impression "you have only seen her once—I think."

"I have seen her often, sir," replied his son. "When I was down in ———shire last year I saw her more than once. I loved her then—I love her now; and as to winning her, what I now seek is your consent to try."

"Well, Henry," replied his father, "you have my consent; for I have often, very often indeed, wished—that is to say thought—that if I could make Colonel Adair some compensation for the loss of his fortune, I should be very glad indeed."

Henry Adair thanked his father again and again, not only for his acquiescence, which was much more ready than he had expected, but for the feelings—which he thought generous—whereon that ready acquiescence was based.—Nothing more than his father's consent seemed necessary at the time to Henry Adair, for all considerations of the fortune that was to be given to him to enable him to marry, were dust in the balance compared with the eagerness of other feelings. For the sake of his father,

he had trained himself to bear many privations to which rank and fortune would never have subjected him—for the sake of not crossing even the base passion of his parent, he had foreborne luxurious enjoyments, conveniences to which he had every right—what would he have done then for the sake of Helen Adair, and the passion that she inspired?

Almost as soon as breakfast was over, he took his hat, and walked towards the house of Lady Mary Denham; for, as we have before said, he little minded forms or ceremonies, or conventional hours, when he had any great object in view. He went along, too, with the bounding step of joy; for his heart was one easily raised by favourable auguries, and his unexpected success with his father led him to expect the same in his farther progress. As he approached the house, however, the barometer of hope began to fall; and it was sadly depressed when he came near, and saw a splendid carriage at the door with servants clothed in the livery of the family. "They are going out!" he thought, "and in common courtesy I cannot detain them; I will pass on, and wait till they return."

He did pass on, and the servant who remembered his face touched his hat; but at the end of the street the carriage overtook him, and rolled past. He looked in, but it only contained Lady Mary Denham and Lady Pontypool, and they were too busy in their own conversation to remark him. With a beating heart, Henry Adair turned back, rang the bell of Lady Mary's house, and asked at once for Miss Adair. She was at home, the servant said, and preceded him up the staircase; but he followed with a rapid foot, and scarcely was his name announced when he was in the saloon.

Helen, who had been writing, had laid down her pen, and was very pale; but she of course treated her unexpected visitor with politeness, and said that she was sorry both Lady Mary and Lady Pontypool were out. She might hope, perhaps, that it would be a hint to her cousin to shorten his visit; for she felt that there was an unpleasant explanation impending which she would have given worlds to avoid.

Henry Adair, however, replied at once, "I am glad of it; for my visit was not to them, but to you. We are cousins, Miss Adair, and I am sure that it is not in your nature to be harsh or unkind." The paleness, and anxiety of Helen's look did not escape him, and his heart

beat more quickly, but not more joyously—he regretted that he had been so hasty—he was sorry that he had not waited—but still he went on. “I come to you to-day,” he said, “to apologise for my conduct some months ago, and to assure you that it was not at all of the kind—of the nature which I am afraid it must have appeared. Indeed,” he continued, “I have reproached myself for it ever since; but you must make some excuse for me, Miss Adair, when you remember that I have not been brought up as other young men have, that I have mingled but little with persons of my age and station, that I have lived in fanciful visions, and have, I am afraid, hitherto subjected my manners and my conduct but too little to the dictation of society. I trust, therefore, that you will give me your pardon.”

“Oh! certainly,” replied Helen, greatly relieved; “think no more of it, Mr. Adair, as I am sure I shall not. Such things are best forgotten as soon as possible.”

“Forget it, I can never,” he replied, drawing encouragement from the change of Helen’s countenance, which would have afforded anything but hope if he could have perceived in what feelings that change arose—“but I am only anxious that you should understand and forgive conduct which, perhaps, in any one less odd and more acquainted with the world than I am, might have been insulting. I saw you—I admired you—I felt that for the first time I had beheld a woman that I could love, and I should have judged it very hard that, because I had no formal introduction, I should lose the only opportunities I might ever have of gaining that which would make me happy for life. And now,” he added, fixing his large fine eyes full upon her countenance, and reading but too well the expression that it had now assumed—“and now that I have obtained such an introduction as I could have desired, I am afraid that I am too late—that the cup of happiness has been snatched from my lip—that your heart is no longer to be given!”

He paused, and Helen lifted her eyes with a look of painful, anxious hesitation; for he evidently expected a reply, and she knew not what to say. “Indeed, Mr. Adair,” she at length said, “indeed, I hope that this has not gone so far as in any degree seriously to affect your happiness. I will not,” she added, seeing him shake his head with a bitter smile, “I will not pretend to look upon your feelings as I might those of most other people, in

such circumstances—I will not affect to look upon your regard as a youthful fancy that will soon pass away—but still I must hope, as you have only known me a very, very short time, and never were actually in society with me till last night, that your feelings will yield to reason. You can tell nothing of my disposition, little even of my manners, feelings, or thoughts—you cannot, indeed, have any certainty that you could either esteem or like me if you knew me better, and under such circumstances——”

“Do you think, Miss Adair,” he asked, interrupting her as she paused with some hesitation in regard to the conclusion of her sentence, “do you think that the face—that the glorious countenance, the book of feelings, the page of the soul—can give no insight into the heart—that it cannot, that it does not declare, in language a thousand times more sincere than that of the tongue, the deep secrets of the human heart? But it is in vain, Miss Adair—you love me not—you cannot love me.”—Helen was silent, and he proceeded: “And yet, say something to me! Let me hear my fate from your own lips—tell me yourself to be unhappy!”

“Oh, Mr. Adair!” she replied, “you put me to a hard necessity. I would fain tell you to be happy—I would fain say how sorry I am that I cannot in any degree contribute to your happiness—I would fain point out to you that, if you chose to exert yourself, you will soon forget one who is unable to return your love—whom you have known so short a time, and of whom you really know so little.”

“No, Miss Adair,” he said, “I must not so flatter myself. I shall never forget you. Your image will be as deeply impressed upon my heart at the day of my death, as it is even now—but still your happiness shall be my first wish—my fondest prayer. I know, I see it all—you love another!” Helen was silent.—“And if you love Charles Lacy,” he continued, “you love one worthy of you—a noble, feeling, generous, upright man—a man bearing about a feeling heart in a world where such are few. But with regard to him I have been deceived, or last night would have saved both you and me the pain of this morning. I was told that he was about to marry his cousin, Lady Mary Denham, and I was told so on authority which I could not doubt.”

“Indeed!” cried Helen, not a little surprised, and

thrown off her guard by astonishment; "indeed!—who could be the person to tell you such a thing?"

"It was my own father," replied Henry Adair, "but authorised to say so by Lady Pontypool."

"How very unfortunate!" exclaimed Helen; but then remembering that she was betraying not only the secrets of her own bosom, but those of Lacy also, she paused abruptly, and blushed deeply again.

"Miss Adair!" continued her cousin, rising, "I have certainly no right to pry into the secrets of your bosom; but it is vain to attempt to hide from me where your affections are engaged. Had I not been blinded before I came here by false information, I should not have remained in doubt a moment. But fear not that I will make any wrong use of my discovery; fear not that passion, or disappointment, or mortified pride will ever induce me to suffer a word that you could not wish to pass my lips. On the contrary, if any sacrifice, if any effort of mine could make you happier, no sacrifice, no effort would be spared by me. That I can never cease to love you ardently, passionately, I regret, because I could wish to teach you to regard me as a brother; but, at all events, should you ever need my assistance in anything—and our situation as relations renders such a thing possible—you will find that I will act like a brother. And now farewell! for my longer stay would only add to my own sorrow, and give pain to you." He held out his hand to her as he spoke.

Helen could not refuse him hers, and taking it tenderly and respectfully, he raised it to his lips, dropped it, and without another word turned and quitted the salon.

He had retained his composure through the whole of a scene the most painful, to a heart like his, that can be described; but that composure was lost when he had quitted the presence of Helen Adair. Bitter, bitter disappointment preyed upon his heart; and hurrying along like a madman, he passed through the streets which were now becoming crowded, pushing from his path all that obstructed his way. As soon as the door was open, he was passing on to his own room, but his father met him in the vestibule, asking, "Well, Henry, how have you sped?" Henry Adair replied not at the moment, but walked on into the salon, and there casting himself upon a chair, fixed his eyes upon his father who stood opposite to him, perceiving from his whole appearance that his son was dreadfully agitated.

"I have suffered a deep and bitter disappointment," the young man said at length; "she loves another!"

"Well, well, Henry," said his father, in a tone of consolation; his first feelings being excited for his son, before he thought of what might be the consequences to himself,—"well, well, Henry, do not suffer yourself to be so shaken, my dear boy—these feelings will pass away; there are other women in the world as beautiful as she is—be comforted."

"If you had suddenly lost everything you have, and of all your wealth had but a guinea, would you be comforted?" demanded his son, rising; and without other reply he left the room, and proceeded to his own apartments. There he remained during the whole day, but towards night he came down again. By this time his agitation had ceased: he was calm and collected, but a deep melancholy had taken possession of him, and though his manner to his father exhibited increased tenderness, yet he spoke no more of his own disappointment.

CHAPTER XXII.

WHILE events, that she would have given worlds to have prevented, were thus passing in the house of Lady Mary Denham, she herself, having entered her carriage with Lady Pontypool, was rolling along through the streets of Brussels upon some ordinary expedition—I forget what. The moment she was in her carriage, however, my Aunt Pontypool began: “Oh! my dear Mary, I am so glad to have a few minutes alone with you. Do you know, I have fallen upon the very best scheme in the world for Helen Adair!”

“The Lord deliver her therefrom!” thought Lady Mary, who was but too well aware of the obliquity of Lady Pontypool’s aim in general, when she strove hard to hit a particular mark. She refrained, however, from anything sharp, and only asked, “Well, my dear aunt, and what is your scheme?”

Thus encouraged, Lady Pontypool proceeded, and while Lady Mary’s cheeks went on from one stage of crimson to another, and her ears tingled as if some one had boxed them, all out of shame and mortification for her aunt and Helen Adair, my admirable Aunt Pontypool went in triumph through the recapitulation of all her achievements, and ended by saying, that from what she had seen last night, she had no doubt that young Adair would be there in the course of the day, to make his proposal in form.

“God forbid!” cried Lady Mary; “why, my dear Aunt Pontypool, do you know what you have done? Why, Helen Adair is engaged to Charles Lacy—I find you must be told, lest you should make matters worse; but indeed, indeed, my dear aunt, you should not enter upon any of these plans without consulting the people principally concerned; and do remember, that in regard to what I have said about Charles and Helen, you must on no account mention it to any one.”

Lady Pontypool had fallen back in the carriage, in consternation and astonishment at the breaking-down of this new scheme, on which—after the failure of a thousand

others that she had seen ruined in the course of her life—she had fixed her hopes with the fullest confidence. All she ventured to utter, however, was, “Why, my dear Mary, I thought you were going to marry Charles Lacy yourself!”

“Why, I can only say, my dear aunt,” replied Lady Mary, “that I have told you a thousand times that I had no intention of doing any such thing.”

“Oh! but I thought that was only joking, Mary,” she answered, still thinking that anybody else was wrong but herself, though she felt a little shame and a little sorrow it is true; but not enough of either to prevent her doing the same thing the very next minute, if occasion presented;—“you always speak in such a gay and joking way, Mary, that I am never sure whether you are in jest or in earnest. At all events, my dear niece, my intentions at least were good; I had no other wish than Helen’s benefit, poor dear girl! The matter is not so very bad, after all.”

“Well, well, my dear aunt,” answered Lady Mary, “it is done, and so it cannot be helped now; but I must get back as fast as I can to consult with Helen, and see what can be devised to remedy all this; but in the meantime, for heaven’s sake do promise me not to do anything further in the business yourself, and not even to mention a word of it, or of the engagement between Charles and Helen, to any one.”

Lady Pontypool very willingly promised, having in her own mind always ready a store of perfectly innocent mental reservations, which rendered such promises on her part of very little avail. For instance, in the present case, she would not at all have scrupled to talk over the whole affair in all its particulars, with either Lord Methwyn or Colonel Adair, contriving generally to think—“Oh, they must know it; there can be no harm in speaking of it to them,” in regard to the very people, in whose favour an exception was least to be made.

As soon as she possibly could, Lady Mary returned home; but, as we have already seen, her arrival did not take place till the visit of Henry Adair was over, so that all Lady Mary could do was to explain to Helen how the whole business had occurred. Helen was agitated and out of spirits, for, to a woman of any feeling, the duty which she had just executed must always be a most painful one; but at the same time, though she certainly did wish that Lady Pontypool had not brought such a task on her head,

she felt all the kindness of the good lady's intentions, and was grateful even for the endeavours which had ended in discomfort. But Helen was at the moment still further embarrassed by a case of conscience, in which her feelings and her understanding exercised much casuistry. It was, whether she should or should not tell Lacy what had occurred. Delicacy of feeling towards Henry Adair said, "No; keep the secret of his unfortunate love to your own bosom, or at least tell it not to his happier rival." But then the rule that she had laid down for herself from the first, of having no concealments from the man to whom she had given her heart and promised her hand, bade her tell him the whole, especially as it was a point which, concerning her affections, touched him also.

She remembered too, that she had promised him an explanation of her agitation on the preceding night, and that the one subject would lead directly to the other; but still she had hardly made up her mind to do so, when Mary Denham returned; and after listening to the history of my Aunt Pontypool's campaign, Helen told her difficulty, and asked her fair cousin's advice.

"Oh, tell him all, Helen," answered Lady Mary, "it is always the best plan. A woman should never let the man she loves have anything to find out, except how much she loves him. Take my advice—tell him all! You risk nothing, for, according to your account, Mr. Adair has acted perfectly like a gentleman, and a man of good feeling; and I know Lacy well enough to be sure that he will be sorry for him. Tell him, Helen! tell him!"

Such advice confirmed her own half-determined purpose, and Helen waited anxiously for the hour that was to bring her lover. Lacy appeared considerably before the usual dinner time, and Lady Mary resolving that he should have full opportunity of hearing all Helen had to tell, not only quitted the drawing-room herself, but sent for Lady Pontypool, who had remained working the most tiresome purse that ever flowed from silk and knitting-needles. Although Helen Adair had before this time found herself alone with Charles Lacy, and had heard all from his lips that love and tenderness could bring within the magic circle of a few short minutes, yet still she never was so left without feeling that trembling thrill of deep emotion which nothing but love can give. On the present occasion it was stronger than ever, and she was pale too from the agitation of the morning, so that Lacy had a good

opportunity of introducing the subject on which he certainly was curious.

"You are pale, my beloved Helen," he said; "I am afraid that the agitation which you suffered last night was too serious to be easily forgotten."

"Oh no, Charles," she answered. "But I have been agitated this morning also, and as I have determined always to tell you everything, I may as well begin my story at once."

"Thank you, thank you, for that determination, dear girl," replied Lacy; "depend upon it, it will make us but the happier. You said, however, that if it had not been for your cousin, Henry Adair, you would never have known me. First let me hear how that can be, my Helen, for I puzzled myself with it all last night."

"Why it happened thus," answered Helen; "you know our little village church at home—at least what used to be my home—now I have none."

"I hope ere long that we shall have but one," answered Lacy. "But go on, dear girl; I know the church well—what happened there, Helen?"

"Why there I first saw my poor cousin Henry Adair," answered Helen. "I did not know him or anything about him, it is true; but I saw a stranger, evidently a gentleman, staring at me through the whole of the service in a way that embarrassed and displeased me; and the next Sunday the same was repeated. Two days afterwards, as I was walking alone through the fields between our own house and the rectory, I saw the same person; but as everybody there is accustomed to walk alone, I had no fear, and turning my eyes another way, I passed him as fast as I could. Twice the next day he passed by the house, and the very next time I was out alone, I again met him in the fields, just as I was coming to a gate. He opened the gate for me to pass, and as I did so spoke to me."

Lacy turned very red, and there was a certain quivering of the upper lip, and expansion of the nostrils, which might have augured ill towards Henry Adair, but Helen went on,—“Nay, do not look so angry, Charles. Do you know, you men often frighten women into concealments? It was so with my father, Charles, in this very instance. I knew that he was hasty, and that where he thought his daughter insulted, he would listen to no reason; so, after deliberating long, I could not make up my mind to tell him.”

"He is very singular and eccentric—your cousin, I mean," replied Lacy; "and I know, Helen, that what would be exceedingly insolent and ungentlemanly in other men, would assume another appearance in him; but in this instance he was very wrong. What did he say to you when he spoke as you describe?"

"I really hardly know," answered Helen; "he began with excuses for his conduct, I believe; but I was so astonished, and got away so quickly, that I hardly know what he said, or what I replied; but I am afraid that my answer was very angry."

"Well did he deserve it!" answered Lacy; "but did you ever see him afterwards?"

"Never till last night," replied Helen. "My father at that time was just upon the eve of setting off for London, to inquire into that sad business of his agent's failure. I was afraid to tell him what had occurred, for I knew he would instantly seek out and punish the offender; but, at the same time, I did not like the idea of remaining totally alone in our own house, and having to go everywhere without a companion till he returned; and, therefore, I went over to our excellent Mrs. Bellingham, and telling her all, I plainly invited myself to pass the period of my father's absence at the rectory. I knew they would receive me gladly; and shortly after I went there you came down to the Hall."

"Your conduct is always wise and excellent, dearest Helen," replied Lacy; "and as to this error of your cousin, I suppose we must pass it over in favour of his eccentricities. I do not wonder at your surprise on seeing him last night; but you say that you have been again agitated this morning, and I should suppose that you had been giving your father a complete explanation of our engagement, if I did not know that he went yesterday to Nivelles, with the division of the Prince of Orange."

"Oh, no," replied Helen, the colour coming up into her temples, as she prepared for the remaining part of the task she had imposed upon herself—"oh, no! it was my cousin again who agitated me."

Lacy's brow grew very dark, but Helen went on to explain, and without dwelling on all the small particulars of her relation's conduct, merely told that he had that morning come to offer her his hand in a formal manner, and ~~seemed~~ so pained and hurt by his disappointment, that he ~~had made~~ her sincerely sorry for him.

"I will not be jealous, Helen," replied Lacy, "though pity be akin to love; but I need not ask if my dear Helen gave him so decided an answer as to preclude his entertaining hopes that I trust will be in vain."

"Most certainly I did," replied Helen; "but he himself rapidly came to the same conclusion. Indeed, Charles, he very soon comprehended that my heart was not my own to give," she added with a brightening smile, for her feelings had hitherto been somewhat sad upon the whole business; "and he at once fixed upon you as its possessor. He spoke of you, Charles, as I love to hear; and he said, with much real consideration for me in the midst of his own distress, that after what he had seen last night, he would not have given me the pain of such a declaration as he had just made, if he had not been misled by good Lady Pontypool having told his father that you were engaged to Mary."

"Oh, my Aunt Pontypool! my Aunt Pontypool!" cried Lacy, "what mischief thou dost make, with the very best intentions in the world!"

There was still many a question to be asked and to be answered; and in the short half-hour that remained before they were interrupted, how many minutes of pure, unmingled happiness did they obtain in each other's society! Dinner was scarcely over, when a step sounded near the dining-hall of some one approaching with familiar intimacy; and in a moment after Lady Mary Denham's check would easily have told, to those who knew the secrets of her heart, that the coming visitor was Major Kennedy.

"I have intruded upon you," he said, "at an untimely hour." But Mary only replied by a smile mingled with a slight look of reproach, which he wisely did not apply to his untimely visit, but to his supposing it unwelcome.

"The truth is, I am afraid that I shall not be able to go to the duchess's ball to-night," he continued; "and I did not choose to lose altogether the pleasure I had promised myself."

"But how happens it," demanded Lady Mary, who observed a thoughtful kind of gloom hanging upon Kennedy's brow, "how happens it, recreant knight, that you abandoned those you had promised to protect? I hope you have taken care to provide me with another partner for number one. But seriously, Major Kennedy, what is the cause—for I see that there is some cause—for your

"Merely this, my dear Lady Mary," replied Kennedy. "Rumours are flying very thick in the town regarding the French operations, and I received a letter from Namur this afternoon, brought by an especial courier, who found it scarcely possible to pass, showing that the French are advancing in force on the side of Frasné; we, therefore, cannot be long without a collision. What the duke intends to do, I cannot of course tell; but I have no doubt that he will wait till the very last moment ere he determines on any point of opposition, in order to be certain of his enemy's views; but when he does strike, it will not be without effect, depend upon it; and I am anxious to be perfectly ready when the moment comes. I have much to do—and suppose we were ordered to march to-night!"

"But, good God! is such a thing possible?" cried Lady Mary, rising and turning very pale; "let us go to the drawing-room. You alarm me, Major Kennedy."

"I am sorry to do so, Mary," he replied, "but still the truth must be told. I have no doubt, indeed, that whatever the duke determines on," he added, in a more cheerful tone, "will be for the glory of our country and ourselves. But still, Mary," he said, in a lower voice, as he perceived that they had become a little separated from the rest of the party in their progress towards the saloon; "still we are evidently on the eve of active measures. I might be ordered to march at a moment's notice, and not have an opportunity of bidding you farewell. If, without impropriety, you could grant it to me, dear Mary, I would beg that our parting should be alone. Can you give me five minutes, do you think, in the course of the evening?"

"Certainly!" replied Lady Mary Denham; "I am sure I do not know why I wished all this kept private till the time for our marriage came near. It was, I believe, to avoid the teasing of the world, and the complimenting, and wondering, and all that, till it was inevitable; but I am neither afraid nor ashamed of my choice, Kennedy, and I do not see why the whole should not be spoken of now as well as hereafter. Let me know then when the last minute you can spare comes near, and you shall not find me unwilling to avow our engagement at once."

When they reached the drawing-room the conversation again became general, and approaching events were canvassed more particularly; but at length the clock upon the mantel-piece pointed to eight, and Kennedy directed Lady Mary's eyes to the hand of the dial. Oh! how pre-

cious do moments sometimes become! Mary Denham rose, and to the astonishment of my Aunt Pontypool, she said, "Major Kennedy, before you go, I desire five minutes' conversation with you. Will you come with me into the next room? See if there be lights there."

There were lights, and Kennedy led her into the adjoining salon, closing the door. Mary Denham left her hand in his, and gazing anxiously in his face, while her heart sunk at the thought that she might never behold those features again, she said, "Oh! Kennedy, is it possible that you are likely to leave me so soon? I did not think I should have felt this so much!"

"Indeed, Mary," he replied, "you cannot feel it more than I do. I have often gone to battle before, and encountered the enemy without a thought; but then, Mary, I could but lose life—and now, with life I lose Mary Denham. Oh! dear girl, what a change you have brought over all my feelings! But I must not speak longer on such things, dear Mary, or I shall grow a woman. The object of my seeking this interview was neither to pain you, Mary, nor to make you at all avow our engagement farther than you may think necessary. It was, dear, excellent girl, to express, perhaps for the last time, how deeply, how sincerely, how tenderly I love you—to thank you for a preference which I feel to have been unmerited by me, and which was contrary to all the ordinary maxims of the world—to assure you that this heart, which never can be grateful enough for your generous affection, will only cease to beat for you when it ceases to beat for ever—and to hold you for the first time to this bosom, while we mutually pray that it may not be for the last!"

As he spoke, he clasped her gently in his arms, and pressed one fond kiss upon the lips of her he loved. Mary drooped her head and wept; and for some moments neither of them spoke, but their hearts were raised in prayer to the Lord God of all things. At length, she exclaimed suddenly, "The picture, Kennedy—you promised me your picture!"

"It is here," he replied, producing it.

Mary turned to the light, and wiping the tears away that dimmed her eyes, she gazed on it for several minutes. "Yes, it is like! very like!" she said; "I am afraid mine is less so, for the man wanted to flatter me—but at all events, here it is, Kennedy;" and opening a drawer in a writing desk, she took out a small red case, and from

that a picture set in gold. "There Kennedy," she said, "you will not forget me. But you are going to battle," she added, laying her two hands on his, and gazing up into his eyes—"you are going to battle, and it is but fit that I should think of all that may happen. I have already thought of it, Kennedy, and it may not be disagreeable to you to hear, that if you fall I shall look upon myself as your widow. It has always been my opinion, also, that widows should never marry again—you understand me! Nay, do not shake your head!—You do not yet know Mary Denham fully. I promise voluntarily and most solemnly never to give my hand to another.—And now, Kennedy," she added in a firmer tone, "now we have looked upon the darker side of things, let us turn the page. I say to you, Go, my hero—go! conquer, live! and come back to claim a hand that will be given to you most willingly!"

Kennedy caught her again to his heart, and then tore himself away. Mary Denham remained for a few minutes alone, ere she returned to the salon, where the evidences of tears were still very plainly read upon her face. "Dear Helen," she said, "it is time for you to dress for the Duchess's ball; but my aunt Pontypool will be your chaperon, for I am not in spirits to go; and Lacy will meet you there, you know, and I dare say has already engaged you to dance with him.—Have you not, Charles?"

Lacy smiled; and Helen would fain have gained permission to stay at home too, but Lady Mary would not consent; and Lady Pontypool, who cared nothing about the ball herself, would insist upon Helen going, feeling perfectly sure that she (Lady Pontypool) knew what would give pleasure to Helen Adair much better than Helen Adair did herself. Towards ten o'clock then, Lady Pontypool and Helen set out for a ball, which none of those who were at it will ever forget. Lacy was there before them; and Helen, whose beauty certainly outshone all that surrounded her, though there were there many of the loveliest of our own land of loveliness, had danced twice with him, when one of the servants of the house, who was acquainted with Lacy's person, came up, and asked, in a low tone, if he could tell him which was Miss Adair. Lacy complied, and the servant informed her that Lady Mary Denham was unwell, and had sent the carriage for her, begging she would come back.

Helen looked for Lady Pontypool, but the worthy lady had sat down to cards in an inner room; and Lacy said,

"Perhaps you had better not disturb her, Helen. Mary must be ill, indeed, to send for you; and my good Aunt Pontypool is not of the greatest assistance in the world under such circumstances. I will tell her when she has done her game; and as, I suppose, my going with you is impossible, according to the code of rules and ceremonies, I will come with her if you will send the carriage back for us."

Helen agreed to do so, and hurried down-stairs; a carriage was at the door with a servant in Lady Mary's livery; and when the steps were let down, Lacy seeing some one in it, asked, "Who is that;" in reply to which the voice of Helen's little maid replied, "It is I, sir—Louisa."

"Is Lady Mary very ill?" demanded Lacy.

"I don't know sir," replied the girl; and Helen entering the carriage, the door was closed and the vehicle drove off.

Lacy gazed after it for a moment, and then muttering, "That does not look like either of Mary's carriages—but it may be Lady Pontypool's," he returned to the ball-room. On entering the room in which the card-players had been busy, he found the game at an end, and a change of arrangements taking place. He then told Lady Pontypool immediately what had occurred; and while they were waiting to give the vehicle time to return, he asked casually what colour her carriage was painted.

"The same as Mary's," she answered—"green. Why, you have seen it a thousand times, Charles."

"But this was yellow," said Lacy, "this chariot that was sent for Helen. There is something strange about the business."

"Oh, I dare say that they did not wait for any of our own, but got the first they could find," replied Lady Pontypool; and thus quieted, Lacy remained for a few minutes longer by the side of the old lady. At length, however, he rose, and told a servant to see for Lady Pontypool's servants. The next moment, "Lady Pontypool's carriage stops the way!" was shouted as loudly as ever it had echoed through the doors of the Opera-house; and leading her down, Lacy handed her in and followed. A few minutes brought them to the door of Lady Mary's dwelling, where, to Lady Pontypool's inquiry of how her niece was, the servant replied quietly, "Very well, my lady, I believe!"

Lacy took fright, and forgetting all politeness, ran past Lady Pontypool and entered the drawing-room. There sat Lady Mary Denham at a table, writing quite calmly—

a little pale, indeed, but bearing no other sign of illness in her whole appearance.

"Mary, where is Helen?" exclaimed Charles Lacy; "they said you were ill!"

"Ill!" replied Lady Mary—"Helen!—what do you mean, Charles? I have not seen her!"

"Good God!" he cried, "then they have carried her off."

"Carried off Helen!" exclaimed Lady Mary, starting up;—"impossible, Charles!—What has happened? Tell me! do tell me, my dear aunt, for Charles seems mad!"

"I am mad, I believe!" cried Lacy. But what between his incoherent account, and Lady Pontypool's desultory one, the truth was soon communicated to Mary Denham; who, acting with more prudence than either, called the servants, and asked such questions as very quickly elicited the following facts.—That none of them, except the coachman and footman, who had accompanied Helen and Lady Pontypool to the ball, had been out during the evening—that they, the coachman and footman, had remained waiting those ladies' return without ever leaving the neighbourhood of the house to which they went—that a person with a carriage had come to Lady Mary's not long after the other carriage had gone, and had sent up a note to Louisa, Miss Helen's maid; upon which she had come down, telling one of the other servants that her lady had been taken ill at the ball and sent for her; and that she had got into the carriage in waiting and driven away. Besides this, it appeared that some person had been asking manifold questions of one of the inferior servants the day before, but no correct description could be obtained. This was all that was to be learned; and the mind of Lacy was wandering over many a painful conjecture, when Lady Pontypool happened by chance to mention the name of Lord Adair.

Lacy instantly snatched up his hat and gloves, and was hurrying towards the door; but ere he reached it he paused thoughtfully, saying, "He would never commit such an act!—yet it is as well to see. Did I not know that the regiment of that young rascal marched out this morning, I should think that he were the person; but it cannot be."

Who was either of the two persons of whom he spoke, he left Lady Mary and Lady Pontypool to conjecture, and hurrying out of the house, strode onward to the dwelling of Lord Adair. It was now about twelve o'clock, and

Lacy was kept some time, ere a servant, evidently disturbed in the midst of the act of undressing, opened the door and stared in the face of the untimely visitor. He asked at once for Mr. Adair, and the man replied that "he was at home, but he believed in bed." The whole house had so little the air of one in which a plot had just been exploded, that Lacy's belief in young Adair's innocence of all such actions was very much strengthened. He demanded to see him, however, and directed the servant to give his name. The man accordingly ran up with the hand-lamp he carried, leaving Lacy in the dark in the vestibule; and there he could plainly hear the opening of Henry Adair's door, and the brief conversation to which his message gave rise.

"Captain Lacy!" said the young gentleman in a tone of surprise; "what can he want? but send him up directly."

Those few words dispelled Lacy's remaining doubts, and he certainly wished that he had not come; but as the matter was done, he followed the servant to Henry Adair's dressing-room, where he found him sitting partly undressed, with several volumes open on the table before him.

"Good evening to you, Lacy," he said, without tendering his hand; "what are your commands? for I take it for granted that your errand is weighty to be borne at this time of night. Sit down, I beg."

"I have not time at present," answered Lacy, who had now determined on his line of conduct; "I am agitated and alarmed, Adair; and in that agitation and alarm, I have suspected you wrongly—at least, I will not say suspected—for even while I felt it my duty to come here and see you personally, I was sure that you were not a man to endeavour by unfair means to obtain the hand of a woman whose heart was given to another."

"What do you mean?" cried Henry Adair, starting up. "Who do you mean? Helen Adair! Unfair means! Something has happened, Lacy! Tell me all, I beg of you!"

Lacy in reply briefly explained what had occurred, and the agitation of Henry Adair on hearing it was scarcely less than his own.

"You could not believe me guilty of such a thing!" he cried. "I would sooner die! But I will help you in your search. I have a right—I am her cousin; and if I

can deliver her and give her back to you, Lacy, that will be some consolation to me at least. To aid in making her happy is the brightest hope now left to me."

Lacy wrung his hand; and the other continued, drawing on again his boots in order to join instantly in the search—"But do you suspect nobody else—is there no one whom you think likely to commit such an act?"

"Perhaps there may be!" replied Lacy; "but I will not mention his name, for I have been wrong once to-night, and I may be doing him an injustice too. Indeed, I do not see how it is possible he can be the person; but I will take care to trace him out and ascertain."

"Do so!" replied Henry Adair, "go; make haste, and I, in the meantime, will hurry round to all the gates. The people there know me so well from stopping often to speak as I ride through, that I shall soon hear who has passed; but do not wait for me, I will come to you as soon as I have learned anything certain."

Lacy hurried away to pursue his search. While he did so, Henry Adair hastily dressed himself again, and then bidding the servant sit up for him, he ran out into the streets. There putting himself into a fiacre, and paying the man largely to drive quick, he proceeded to all the gates, where by dint of money and persuasions, he induced the 'concierges' to give the name of every stranger who had passed within the last two hours. There were several names in this catalogue that he knew, but none which offered the slightest probability of being attached to the person who had carried off Helen Adair.

But the report at the Porte de Namur still left very great room for conjecture. There, the man said, that as on that night so many people were coming in and going out to and from the great ball given by the Duchesse de Rickemonde, he had not of course been able to examine all the carriages, or take down all the names. The servants, he said, gave the names as the carriages passed, and when he saw that they were carriages belonging to the town or the neighbourhood he took no further notice.

Thinking that the people of the Octroi, or receivers of the town toll, might have been more strict, to them he applied for information; but they replied that they only stopped persons entering the city, not those going out; and thus mortified and disappointed, Henry Adair ordered the driver to proceed to Lacy's quarters in order to give him an account of what he had done, and to consult with more deliberation on some further plan of search.

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHILE Henry Adair had thus occupied himself in vain, Charles Lacy had accidentally gained some information which was calculated to confirm the suspicions which he already entertained, and to put him on the right track ; but at the same time he was interrupted in his pursuit by obstacles which he could not surmount. Within a hundred yards of the house of Lord Adair he thought he heard a distant drum, and then was very certain that he could distinguish, proceeding from the barracks in the lower town, the peculiar harsh bugle-call of some of the Flemish regiments. The next moment an English officer approached in regimentals, and just as he was passing him in the obscurity of the street, Lacy recognised Major Kennedy.

"You see I was not wrong in my anticipations, Charles," said Kennedy, as he grasped his hand ; "I felt sure it would be so."

"Then, in the name of Heaven, why did you not tell me?" cried Lacy, his first thought turning to Helen ; but the moment after he added, recollecting himself, "but you must be talking of something else, Kennedy—what has happened?"

"Do you not hear the drum?" cried Kennedy ; "why, despatches have been received from Blucher. The French have crossed the Sambre in force, and are advancing upon Brussels by Charleroi and Fleurus. Orders to march are already at the barracks, and, as I hear, all the other corps at Ath, Murbecke, Grammont, and Braine le Comte have been ordered upon Nivelles. I saw Hay galloping as hard as ever he could towards Enghien, but I had no time to ask nor he to answer questions."

"March to-night!" cried Lacy : "Kennedy, it is impossible that I can go."

"Lacy!" cried Kennedy, in a tone that left all further observation unnecessary—"Lacy!"

"But you do not know what has happened," replied his friend in a state of agitation impossible to describe ; "Helen—Helen Adair has been carried off by some one from the duchess's hall, and I am now in search of them."

"Willingly carried off!" cried Kennedy ; "impossible ; Lacy, she loved you too well, that was evident—there is a mistake."

"No, no! not willingly!" replied Lacy, "by a cursed artifice, which so far took me in, as to make me hand her into the carriage myself;" and in a hurried manner he detailed all that had taken place in regard to the event which so painfully agitated him.

"Be calm, Lacy! be calm!" replied Kennedy; "the matter is not so bad as your anxiety for Miss Adair makes you imagine. She has her maid with her, you say: that will be both a comfort and assistance to her; and to us it is better still, for it shows that the only design of the persons who have her in their power is to frighten her into a marriage with some one else; which, if I have any knowledge of human nature, she will be found the last person on earth to consent to. But what can be their motive? If I understood right her fortune is but small."

"Nothing," answered Lacy, "nothing to make it any consideration to the avaricious. But do you not remember, Kennedy, when we were down at Alton, some stranger getting into the park, and looking in at the windows?"

"I remember it well," replied Kennedy, "and I remember that you thought the fellow looked like young Williamson of the ——. A thousand to one if he knows Miss Adair, and is in love with her——. But he is such a puppy, he can be in love with nothing but himself."

"Ay! but he does both know her, and I rather imagine has proposed for her," answered Lacy, "and as this is just such a trick as I should conceive he might perpetrate, and think it very fine, all my suspicions would turn upon him, if his regiment had not marched upon Nivelles."

"Oh, that is nothing," cried Kennedy, eagerly: "the fellow is in town—I saw him this very night—close to Mary's house too. You remember I left you there about eight; and not a hundred yards down the street I met a man in a large cloak, which, as it was raining, he had got up to his mouth and chin; but I knew him perfectly well, for there was a lamp just over our heads. I did not take any notice, though we do bow and all that when we meet; but I was vexed and agitated myself, and he did not seem to wish to be known."

"I will go and horsewhip him till I leave him not a whole place in his foul skin," cried Lacy. But Kennedy caught his arm.

"No, no, Lacy!" he said. "you are not yourself tonight, Charles. You must march with the regiment. The

young rascal is far enough by this time depend upon it; and the finding him out, and the release of Miss Adair, can be quite as well managed by the police of this town—who are most active and shrewd—as by yourself. Honour and duty call upon you imperatively to think of nothing else but the service of your country at the present moment. Let us go back to Mary, inform her of our suspicions in regard to this fellow Williamson, request her during our absence to send for some of the principal agents of police, tell them all that we know, and offer a hundred napoleons on the recovery of Miss Adair.”

“More than that! more than that!” cried Lacy, “we must make the reward such as to insure the loss of not a moment, and the employment of every means. I will leave my own servant, too, Kennedy, to pursue the track. He is a shrewd and clever man, and will not easily be thrown out.”

Lacy linked his arm in that of his friend, and turning their steps the contrary way they hurried along the streets in which the sound of the drum and the bugle was now becoming loud and frequent, while every five or six steps officers and soldiers, hurrying along to their respective regiments, denoted that the whole of the little world of Brussels was agitated with the bustle of military preparations. These sounds had already reached the ear of Mary Denham, and she was sitting pale and anxious waiting the return of Lacy. Surprise and pleasure certainly did light up her beautiful features and gay blue eyes for a time; but, oh! how many feelings chequered each other in the bosoms of the little party there assembled as they conversed eagerly over what had befallen, and what were the measures necessary in consequence!

The weather was showery, and not very bright; but the gray dawn was breaking slowly as the two young officers took their way to their regiment, from which they had already been absent too long.

By the time an hour was over, however, and the fresh morning air was somewhat warmed by the rising sun, both Lacy and Kennedy were in the saddle, and the regiment prepared to march.

The time came; the word was given, and while multitudes thronged the streets of Brussels even at that early hour, regiment after regiment marched out of the city, and took the way on towards those fields where the last great triumph of England was to be achieved. For a considerable way along the road, Charles Lacy was accompa-

nied by Henry Adair, who communicated to him all that he had done ; and with an eager zeal which seemed for the time to annihilate all his personal feelings, he promised his rival to spare no exertion which could restore Helen to him again. Lacy doubted not his sinserity, and trusted fully to his promises, for he knew that Henry Adair must be judged differently from other men ; and after having ridden on together for two or three miles they parted.

The way, as every one knows, from Brussels to Quatre-Bras is long, and the roads were then heavy with continued rain, so that never did an army destined to fight the instant it arrived, perform a more weary and exhausting march. Passing Waterloo and Genappe, Lacy with his regiment, about a quarter before two, began to hear the distant roar of artillery and fire-arms in advance ; and every one well divined that the Prince of Orange, or some of the other detached corps of the allied army, had already arrived at the point of concentration, and were endeavouring to keep the enemy in check. If any one had previously felt weariness, or had longed to halt for a few moments' rest, these sounds put an end to such sensations in a moment. The foot-soldier raised his head, and marched on with renewed vigour ; the horseman sat his horse more firmly ; and even the noble beasts themselves pricked up the quivering ear, and listened eagerly to the distant fight. Thus regiment after regiment poured along the road, till reaching the little slope which first displays the village of Quatre-Bras, they came rapidly into the presence of the enemy.

It was, like every battle, a scene of great confusion, and, to an unexperienced eye, offered nothing but indistinct masses of troops wheeling about in an irregular manner, involved and half-hidden in clouds of smoke.

But it is not my intention to describe the battle of Quatre-Bras. Suffice it to say then, that the wood on the left was gallantly defended by the Guards, and that all the efforts of the French to dislodge them proved vain—that every attempt to force the centre of the English position was also frustrated—and that, in the end, Marshal Ney, finding his enemies multiplying, and his soldiers fearfully diminishing, thought fit to make a retrograde movement, leaving the ground in possession of the British.

Thus ended the battle of Quatre-Bras ; and during the night the other corps of the allied forces which had been directed to concentrate at that point, arrived upon the field forming a sufficient army to justify an attack upon

the French next morning. Such a measure was generally expected by the whole ; but during the action at Quatre-Bras a severe cannonade had been heard on the left ; and early on the morning of the 17th, a despatch was received by the Duke of Wellington, announcing that, after the hard-contested battle of Ligny, Blücher had been obliged to retreat. A similar movement became necessary in consequence on the part of the British forces, and at ten o'clock the infantry began the retrograde march, which took place upon Genappe.

No little anxiety was now felt for the successful issue of that dangerous proceeding—a retreat in face of a superior enemy. Skilfully, however, did the general mask his retreat ; and it would seem that a great part of the army had passed the point of danger before Napoleon became aware of what was taking place. Even then, the only measure which he took to harass the British retreat was by throwing forward in pursuit a large body of cavalry. One or two charges, however, led by the gallant Marquis of Anglesea, taught the French lancers to keep at a respectful distance ; and even the rear-guard, which had masked the retreat, passed safely through Genappe, and, towards seven o'clock, reached the rising ground between that town and Soignies.

A considerable length of time was occupied in taking up the positions assigned to the different regiments ; but ere night had closed, Lacy gained the long-wished-for moment, and hurried towards the regiment to which young Williamson belonged.

The first person he encountered when he reached the spot was the quarter-master, and from him Lacy immediately demanded where Ensign John Williamson was to be found.

"I am afraid at Quatre-Bras, sir," replied the quarter-master ; "in forming square, one company was left out in our hurry. He was with it, and none of them have come in. Some got into a garden, and I believe surrendered ; but others I myself saw cut down by the cuirassiers."

Charles Lacy turned away with very mixed feelings, and thought of seeking Colonel Adair, whose regiment lay towards the extreme right ; but he remembered that the only tidings which he could give would be of the most painful and agitating nature ; and he determined, therefore, to leave the mind of the veteran officer at peace till the result of the battle either left him free to act, or confounded individual considerations in general calamity.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IN the meantime, it may be asked what had become of Helen Adair. The moment that she was in the carriage which had been sent for her, the door was shut, and the vehicle drove off with fury; the horses were young and spirited and turning the corner with a tremendous sweep had nearly jammed the carriage against another which was coming up; the wheels did grate against each other, and Helen as well as her little maid Louisa uttered a faint scream. Her terror, however, was increased by finding that the horses were now going at full gallop, and she could plainly see by the glimpses of lamp-light the arms of the coachman making what appeared ineffectual efforts to hold them in. Helen was not naturally courageous; she had indeed a moral power over her own emotions sufficient to prevent her fears from becoming apparent, when the expression of them would have been wrong, and sufficient to quell them at all times so far as to leave her faculties free to act; but still she was timid by nature. Thus, finding herself carried on at desperate speed; hearing the madlike clatter of the horses' feet; feeling the carriage reel along with involuntary whirls; and seeing, what she believed to be, the ineffectual efforts of the coachman to stop the horses, she naturally concluded they had run way, and held tight by one of the holders of the carriage, with doubts and apprehensions concerning every post in the road.

Now Helen, although she had been in Brussels some time, was not well acquainted with that city, especially by lamp-light, as she had been but little out in the streets thereof except in a carriage, and that in the daylight. She had seen gardens and parks, as they call them there, and manifold green trees, and houses, and gates, and other things of the kind; so that she had no idea whatever that she was getting out of the precincts of the city of Brussels, and only exclaimed, "Good Heaven! why does not somebody stop the horses?"

This was not exactly the first word she had spoken, for

as soon as she had got into the carriage, she had began by asking Louisa Green a question about her cousin Mary's illness, which question, however, was stopped in the middle by a sudden conviction that the horses had run away. Louisa's answer, whatever it might have been, was strangled in its birth by the same conviction; and the poor girl, terrified in no slight degree, only sobbed out on the present occasion, "Oh, ma'am, they can't! they have run away."

"Sit still—sit still!" cried Helen, as Louisa leaned forward to look out; "sit still, Louisa, and keep quiet!" But still, on went the horses thundering down the hill, and the old gentleman at the barrier, instead of attempting to stop them, pointed to the carriage, saying to another personage on horseback, "Is that it?" and being answered in the affirmative, gave the stranger change, and let the carriage pass.

To the bottom of the hill in the same manner did the vehicle proceed—yea, and up a part of the opposite ascent, which is not near so steep; but gradually the pace slackened—from a gallop it was changed into a canter, from a canter was metamorphosed into a trot, and from a trot relented into a walk.

Helen breathed again, and said, "Thank God!" and then withdrawing herself from the corner into which she had sunk, she let down one of the windows and looked out, when to her astonishment she found herself in the country. Not a house, except some low cottages, and a good Flemish dwelling in an orchard, was near her; and the horses, after their furious drive, were plodding quietly up the remainder of a long heavy hill, a considerable part of which they had cleared under the impetus with which they had come down the opposite descent.

"What can be the meaning of this?" exclaimed Helen, with a sinking feeling at her heart; "Louisa we are out of the town! There must be some mistake."

"It looks like the country indeed, ma'am," replied the girl; "I suppose the horses have run their own way—but how do you feel now, ma'am? I hope it has not made you worse."

"Oh! I was only frightened," replied Helen, somewhat quieted by the calm tone in which the girl spoke. "But what is the matter with Mary? this will delay us sadly, I am afraid—what was the matter with Lady Mary?"

"I do not know indeed, ma'am," replied Louisa; "I

did not know she was ill till Captain Lacy mentioned it just now!"

"Why, she sent you for me, did not she?" exclaimed Helen, turning to gaze upon the girl, who now, on her part, looked up with no small surprise.

"No, ma'am!" replied Louisa, "she did not say anything to me at all! She looked a little pale I thought, for I met her on the stairs as I was coming down—when you sent for me."

"I sent!" cried Helen. "I never sent!"

"Why, ma'am, they brought me a note from you," said the girl; but Helen replied by exclaiming, "Louisa, they are taking us further and further from the town, I see. What can be the meaning of all this?" and letting down the front window, she called to the coachman, demanding where he was driving her. But the man turned round and answered her in Flemish, which, as may be easily supposed, was totally unintelligible to her. His face was also perfectly strange to her, and the next moment she had an opportunity of discovering that the proceeding in which the men were engaged had nothing accidental in its nature; for the footman who had hitherto remained behind the carriage, and had jumped down at the hill, now sprang upon the coach-box, "*Tâchez de les faire aller;*" upon which the man applied his whip sturdily to the horses, showing plainly that he understood French. Helen, thereupon, again leaned forward and remonstrated loudly; but the two men only held a laughing conversation together, and the next moment, reaching the brow of the hill, the horses again felt the lash, and set off, though not so fast as before, yet with quite sufficient rapidity to prevent Helen's entreaties or remonstrances from being heard or attended to.

"What can be the meaning of this, Louisa?" she cried, sinking back in the carriage, and endeavouring to elicit from the maid some facts which might throw even a degree of light upon the transaction under which she was suffering; but the girl was as surprised and frightened as herself—and wringing her hands, she exclaimed, "Oh! why did I come? why did I come? My heart sunk, I declare, from the first."

Helen wanted comfort herself, but yet, with a true charitable heart, she gave her companion as much of that balm as she could, and when she discovered which way the maid's fears tended, did certainly succeed in diminishing her ter-

rors. The next thing was, to collect her thoughts, and endeavour to discover who were the persons who had thus taken possession of her, and what was really their object ; and for this purpose, as soon as the carriage reached another hill, which compelled the horses to go more slowly, she again opened the front window, and in as calm, but determined a tone as she could assume, attempted to reason with the men on the box, mingling threats and promises together, but in vain. The men sometimes talked together, and sometimes laughed ; and when they condescended to speak at all, it was only to utter, the one Flemish, the other, that most maddening of all French phrases, “ *Soyez tranquille, madame, soyez tranquille !* ”

Her only hope now was to appeal to the people of the inn, wherever the vehicle stopped to change horses, feeling very sure that in a country so orderly and well-regulated as Flanders, lawful aid and authority would soon be procured to set her free, if she could but make her situation known. But the carriage drove on, and at the top of a hill, in climbing which she had made the ineffectual attempt to influence the driver and his companion, the turning of the road afforded her a glimpse of that luminous appearance on the clouds which indicates the situation of a large city by night ; while, borne upon the air, came distinct and clear the sound of bugles and of drums.

Other feelings then made her heart sink with apprehensions, not for herself, indeed, though the doubts and fears of her own distressing situation gave tenfold edge to those which she entertained for Lacy and her father. Still on rolled the carriage ; and, instead of even stopping at any house to water the horses, the coachman paused for a moment to let them drink at a little brook which crossed the road. Louisa, more eager and less thoughtful than her mistress, instantly put out her hand from the window, and endeavoured to open the door, determined to jump out and run away. But she found the door locked, and the next moment the carriage was again in motion.

There was nothing to interrupt the view as the eye wandered over the expanse in the moonlight ; and Helen mentally asked herself, “ What place can this be ? ” A little village with its church on the right had been passed before, but the whole of its small world were fast asleep ; and now, for some miles, scarcely a house was to be seen near the road. The moon, too, soon withdrew her glimpses from the earth ; the clouds rolled over her fair face ; and

the rain began to patter on the roof of the carriage which hurried poor Helen Adair along her unwilling way. Fatigue also was added to annoyance, and tended further to depress her spirits.

On first discovering the deceit which had been practised upon her, she had felt comparatively little apprehension. She had been alarmed, it is true, and highly indignant; but she was certain that in such a country as Belgium she would soon be able to procure redress and obtain protection from the law. But now, as time passed, and the distance from Brussels increased, and weariness and the melancholy uncertainty of all the objects around one in a night journey, had their effect upon her mind, imagination took an active part against her. She remembered everything that could be painful and annoying as a consequence of the circumstances in which she was placed:—what might not Lacy think, what might not Lacy do?—what would be the feelings of her father, and of Mary Denham? Did not the fact of some one having sent for her maid in her name, seem as if she herself were privy to the whole business?—and might not those who had her in their power take means to make her friends believe that such was the case? And even when she should be freed, with such men as her father and Lacy interested in her fate, would not the consequences be certain bloodshed, when they discovered who was the person that had committed so daring an offence?

It may be asked if Helen never diversified her unpleasant contemplations, by endeavouring to guess to whom she was indebted for this enforced journey? and it is but candid to say that she really did; that she revolved the matter a thousand times in her mind and always returned to the same point. Helen at once fixed upon the person in regard to whom the reader has already made up his mind. To him also she always returned, after having considered the matter afresh; and she did so, indeed, not without cause.

Ensign John Williamson was not a gentleman, though a great deal had been done to make him so. He had been sent to a clergyman's family as a parlour boarder, where only one or two noblemen's sons were received; he had eke gone to Eton, and had then entered the army; all things calculated in themselves to gentlemanize a man, if such a thing were possible.

With such thoughts chequering her sad and gloomy an-

ticipations, weary, desponding, unhappy, Helen passed nearly four hours ; during which the horses had never stopped for one moment, except to drink at the little stream as before mentioned. She amused herself sometimes, it is true, by talking to her little maid, Louisa ; and soothed herself by endeavouring to soothe her. At other times, she remained sunk back in the carriage, giving herself up to her own unpleasant thoughts ; and only able to resolve upon one thing, which was to make her situation loudly heard as soon as ever the carriage stopped ; and she calculated justly, that it could not go on much further without fresh horses. At one moment she thought she heard the challenge of a sentry, and then several voices speaking, and she started forward to observe ; but the carriage rolled on, and she saw nothing but a wood and a farm-house upon the left of the road, and an old chateau on the right, dimly marked through the first faint effort at twilight, made by the rising of a new day. The road then rose a little, and the carriage paused about a quarter of a mile further on, while the two horsemen who had hitherto followed, rode on. Helen gazed eagerly from the window, bidding Louisa tell her if she saw any one approach her side of the vehicle. No one was to be seen, however ; but the next moment a voice was heard, exclaiming, "Voyons, voyons !" while another replied, "Mais, monsieur, je vous dis que ce n'est que deux dames."

"Mai-i-i-i-s," cried the other voice, with a terrible prolongation of sound, "voyons ces dames !" and in another minute several people with a lantern surrounded the carriage. The person at their head seemed an officer of either a French or Flemish regiment, for their dress was at that time so similar, that they could hardly be recognised the one from the other ; but he had the air of a gentleman, and was, moreover, an elderly man, so that Helen, though her heart beat violently, had no hesitation in addressing herself to him. One of the horsemen who was beside him attempted to stop her, but the old soldier returned a sharp "Taisez vous, Monsieur !" and advanced with a bow to the side of the carriage. Helen's tale was soon told ; and the multitude of violent exclamations which it produced, both from the old officer himself and those who stood by him, showed sufficiently that it differed essentially from that which had been previously delivered by the worthy on horseback, to whom the old gentleman now turned for explanation, beginning with a

"Comment, coquin!" and ending with words which do not require repetition. The man, of course, endeavoured to justify himself, declaring that he was but an agent—that the Monsieur Anglais who had hired, and paid them for what they had done, with a promise of a still larger reward if they delivered the lady safe to people whom he had specified at Namur, had positively assured him that the lady was his wife, privately married; and that she was so, he added, he had every reason to believe, as she got willingly into the carriage; for corroboration of which he appealed to the man who had enacted footman, and was still seated on the box. The brother, thus asked, of course said his brother was not a thief, or in other words declared that Helen had come quite willingly, and had brought her maid with her; but the effect of all their eloquence was immediately destroyed by Helen calmly addressing the old officer again, and saying, "Try, sir, to open either of the doors of the carriage, and you will see in a moment whether I have been brought here willingly." The old officer laid his hand upon the handle, as a new witness cited, and the testimony he received from it was quite satisfactory. In a voice which admitted no further question, he said, "Call up the guard, and put these four men under arrest. Open the door, sir! whoever has got the key."

The key was produced, and the door of the carriage opened, and advancing to the side again, he addressed Helen in a kindly but a grave tone, calculated to impress the junior officers, by whom he was surrounded, with respect for the young and unprotected girl who was thus thrown into their hands. "Madam," he said, "if, as I judge by your accent, you are an English lady, I have the honour of informing you that you have been brought by these men within the outposts of the French army; but make your mind perfectly at ease, for although his majesty the emperor has determined to drive the English and Prussians out of Belgium, yet, of course, we look upon a lady always as an ally, and therefore you may rest satisfied that on the very first opportunity you shall be returned safely to your friends, and in the meantime will receive every attention that French officers can show."

Helen, who had never doubted that she was speaking to a Belgian, had turned a little faint at hearing that she had fallen into the hands of the enemy, but she felt what was due to herself, and to a person who seemed disposed to

treat her with kindness ; and she therefore replied, " I am sir, the daughter of a British officer of some rank ; and, as brave men of all nations feel a respect for each other, I am sure, for my father's sake, you will give me that protection which he would give a daughter of yours under the same circumstances. But is it not possible to send me back to-night ? "

" I am afraid not, madam," answered the old officer. " The horses which have brought you are quite knocked up—all that the neighbourhood supplied have been taken for the purposes of transport, and the people have all fled from the little farm-house of Quatre-Bras down below ; but if you will trust to the protection of old Jean Marc, chef-de-battalion of the ——— regiment, he will take as much care of you, madam, as he would of one of his own daughters, or of his cross," and he touched the ribbon at his button. " To-morrow, we may find means to send you back, but in the meantime you will meet with some accommodation, though not very good, at the place called the Petit-Château, here, where we are quartered, and where the old woman of the house still remains. Drive the horses into the court," he continued ; and walking by the side till the vehicle reached the door, he handed Helen out and led her into the saloon.

The house was nearly filled with soldiers, but the greater part of them were sleeping ; and though Helen's extreme beauty and gay ball dress attracted sufficient attention to be excessively annoying, she was subjected to no rudeness ; and the old officer sat by her side and engaged her in conversation concerning her late adventure, while the woman of the house prepared for her the room which the commander of the post had originally retained for himself. As soon as his own very scanty baggage was removed from it he conducted Helen thither, and bowing low at the door left her to repose.

Helen could almost have wept with joy and agitation, and Louisa, who understood just enough of French to comprehend the general tenor of what was passing around her, did weep outright. To find plenty of locks and bolts upon the inside of her door, was a further comfort to Helen Adair ; and after talking over the whole of their late adventures with Louisa Green she lay down in hopes of obtaining a few hours' sleep. Her mind, however, had been too much agitated for slumber to come readily to her eyelids, and the day had already fully dawned, so that

there was more light than needful in the room. At length, however, weariness and exhaustion prevailed; Louisa, by her side, had long been buried in the arms of the drowsy god, and there is something very infectious in the sight of slumber: Helen's eyes grew heavy, and her thoughts confused; then came an instant of complete forgetfulness—but the next moment she started up with a feeling of alarm, all was still, however; and laying down her head upon the pillow once more she fell into a sound, deep sleep.

How long she had slept she knew not when something awoke her in terror. Louisa was already up and at the window, and when Helen spoke the poor girl turned round with a face as pale as death.

"What is the matter?" cried Helen; "what is the matter, Louisa?" But, ere the girl could answer anything, but, "Oh, madam! oh, Miss Helen!" the roar of a cannon, and then a roll of musketry, told their own tale; and starting up, Helen too ran to the window. The scene that presented itself was that strange one—the beginning of a battle. There was the calm, sweet country—there were the waving crops of tall rye—there were the green, unconscious trees; and the only objects which spoke man's foul and fiend-like contention were the appearance of several regiments on the opposite upland, a few bayonets and cannon in the hamlet below, and here and there a waving wreath of white smoke hanging amongst the trees, where the firing had taken place.

"Open the door, Louisa!" cried Helen; "run down and see if you can find Monsieur Marc—that gentleman who spoke to us last night. Ask him what we had better do?—where we had better go?" But poor Louisa at the very proposal turned such a face of helpless terror upon her mistress, that Helen added, "Well, well, I will go, Louisa:" and opening the door, she ran down-stairs. But the house was quite empty; there was the wooden clock ticking calmly in the passage, and showing Helen she must have slept many hours; but, for some time, that was the only moving thing she could see.

In the meantime the battle did not seem to be proceeding with any great rapidity or vigour on either part; the roar of the cannon and the roll of musketry only took place occasionally; and Helen again approached the window in one of the intervals. All the troops which she had previously beheld had been habited in blue; but, oh!

how her heart beat now, when, crowning the opposite slope, she saw several regiments in British uniform! The next moment, however, her attention was called to another spot, for a sharp galloping of horse was heard, and dashing into the court-yard came twelve or fourteen superior officers, headed by a strong, good-looking man, dressed as a French marshal, who instantly sprang to the ground, with several others, and entered the house. An instant after, steps were heard ascending the stairs; and while Helen's heart was beating every moment with fresh terror, the door of the room was thrown open by the gentleman she had seen alight. He made a sudden pause of surprise when he beheld her; but then recovering himself, he came forward, saying, "Oh! you are the young English lady of whom le Capitaine Marc told me this morning; but, you are in a terribly dangerous situation here. You had really better go to the rear." While he thus spoke to her, however, Marshal Ney (for he it was) approached the window, to reconnoitre the position of the Prince of Orange, which reconnoissance had been in fact the object of his coming, and gazing with a telescope in his hand, he interrupted his speech to Helen more than once, giving orders to those who had followed him: "Indeed you had better go to the rear," he added after a pause; "do you know the way towards Fresne?"

"Not in the least, sir," replied Helen, her heart sinking at the very idea of seeking her way through the French army at the beginning of a battle.

"Those Belgians must be driven out of the wood at the point of the bayonet," said Ney, turning to one of his officers. "Order the seventeenth to clear the Bois de Bossu;" and then turning to Helen, he added, "If you do not know the way, my poor young lady, perhaps you had better stay where you are, after all. The enemy seem to have few guns with them, and if you can barricade that door, and keep away from the window, you may be safe enough. When we have driven the English back upon Brussels, I will take care that you have the means of returning to your friends." So saying, he turned and left her, followed by his staff, many of the young aides-de-camp looking as if they would have had no small pleasure in conducting the fair English girl to the rear, had not imperious duty called them on another path.

When the marshal and his staff were gone, Helen lost no time in following the directions he had given; and

after locking and bolting the door, she drew, with the assistance of the maid, such articles of furniture across it as they could move; and it is wonderful how terror will supply temporary strength to accomplish things, which, at another moment, would seem impossible. When all was completed, and she had seen a barrier raised across the door, which certainly would have been very difficult to force, Helen sat down and listened to the progress of the fight, which was by this time assuming a more decided character. She remained, too, as Marshal Ney had told her, as far from the window as possible, marking with an eager ear all the sounds which told that the strife was no longer a mere skirmish, but a fierce and hard-contested battle. The roaring of the cannon on the French side was loud, and almost deafening, for a battery of field-pieces had been stationed on the slope close by the house; but still her ear, rendered more acute by fear, could distinguish the charging of the horse, as well as the roll of the musketry, and even the word of command and shout of encouragement. She thought, too, that she could hear sometimes the shrill cry of agony, but, perhaps, imagination aided there; and, in truth, it was a moment—as she sat there alone, unprotected, helpless, in the midst of contending armies, listening to the bloody strife—when imagination might call up a thousand painful images for the mind to dwell upon. Doubtless she did so furnish them to poor Helen Adair; and if she thought of her father, and of Charles Lacy, and pictured them mingled in the fearful fight around, or falling beneath the shot of the enemy, or dying slowly of their wounds upon the bloody field, it were not wonderful; nor if she wept, and wept most bitterly, would there be aught to surprise us. Helen Adair did weep, but, unfortunately, they were tears which afforded no relief.

The poor girl, Louisa, was terrified almost out of her senses: the fears which her mistress entertained were dust in the balance compared with what she suffered. Helen's apprehensions for herself, indeed, were chequered by apprehensions for others; but Louisa's fears, all personal, and tremendously powerful, were still not sufficient to keep down curiosity. Ever and anon, for some minutes, she moved to and fro upon the sofa where she was sitting with her mistress; and then muttering something incoherent about "terror," and "liking to know her danger," she crept to the window, and, exposing as little of her

person as possible, gazed out upon the battle. Helen remained, with her hands over her eyes, full of every painful apprehension, with her nerves shaken by all she had undergone, her whole frame trembling and starting with renewed terror at every burst of artillery, notwithstanding their frequency. At length, however, she was roused by Louisa exclaiming, "Oh, Miss Helen! Miss Helen! look here, do look here!" and, in a kind of desperation, she rose, and also approached the window. It was, indeed, an awful moment. A regiment of British infantry was marching across in front of the house, and on it was pouring down a strong cavalry force of lancers and cuirassiers. The ground was uneven, the corn was high, and, at the moment Helen reached the window, the British regiment was forming in square. The hurry, and difficulty of the ground, caused a company to be left out, and upon it the cavalry poured with overpowering force. A cloud of dust hid the whole for a moment; but the next instant Helen beheld Ensign Williamson and about forty men rush across, and throw themselves into the garden of the very house in which she stood. It proved no refuge, however; the wall on two sides was low, on the other there was nothing but a wooden fence. A body of French grenadiers was pushed forward at that moment, and Helen beheld them surrounding the garden wall, which served them but as a breast-work, while with muskets levelled they prepared to pour a murderous cross-fire upon the unhappy men within. "Oh! why do they not surrender?" cried Helen, clasping her hands in agony; but at that moment a bright flash, a cloud of smoke, and a ringing peal, ran round the garden, and, overpowered at length, Helen sank fainting on the floor.

CHAPTER XXV.

WE must, in this chapter, bring the story of all persons herein mentioned to ~~one~~ point, or as near about it as possible ; and therefore we shall now turn again to Mr. Adair, who, after leaving Charles Lacy on his way to Quatre-Bras, returned to Brussels, and, according to Lacy's request, proceeded to the house of Lady Mary Denham as soon as the day was somewhat more advanced. He found Mary holding a tête-à-tête with one of the chief agents of police,—for that lady had an instinctive apprehension of some mainspring breaking whenever my Aunt Pontypool was permitted to mingle with matters which required delicate management. Warned by a note from Lady Mary—which note also contained prospects of very liberal reward—the worthy agent had come prepared with all the information which he could collect at the moment, and having got over the preliminary politesses, he was just about to disburden himself of his tidings when Mr. Adair was announced. Lacy's account of his conversation with him on the preceding evening made Mary admit him willingly, and in his presence the agent went on to detail what he had done, making, of course, the most that he could of his own exertions. “In the first place, madam,” he said, “I set inquiry on foot concerning all the greatest rascals of Brussels, who were likely to fall in the way of a stranger, and to render him service on such an occasion. In this respect, I have had the pleasure of finding that one of our most notorious swindlers prepared himself yesterday for a journey, hired a strong horse, and stole a cloak from a Jew salesman ; and that a suit of livery, such as is worn by your domestics, milady, was ordered in haste at a tailor's, by an old gentleman living in the Rue — ; a fat old man, whom I have seen once or twice.”

“Has he a red face, and small, sharp eyes ?” demanded Mr. Adair.

“Precisely, precisely !” answered the shepherd of rogues and swindlers ; “c'est un vrai Jean Bull !”

“Then the father is implicated as well as the son !” said Mr. Adair.

“I do not know anything about the son,” replied the agent of police ; “all I have heard shows the old, fat man

I have mentioned to be the person solely concerned. I understand that he was seen speaking twice with Jean Quatre Points, as the swindler I have mentioned is called amongst his companions—that he ordered the suit of livery himself, and——”

“I will go to his house and cudgel the breath out of his body this moment!” cried Henry Adair, snatching up his hat and gloves.

“You may save yourself the trouble,” replied the agent of police, who well understood English, which was the language whereof Henry Adair had made use, it being the language best fitted on earth to express indignation; “you may save yourself the trouble, sir—for, in the first place, I should expect you would find no truth in him; and in the next, he left Brussels, or at least his lodgings in the Rue de —— at ten o’clock last night.”

“Just about the time that this infamous piece of insane knavery was practised!” exclaimed Henry Adair; “it must be that old villain Williamson, though what can be his object, God only knows.”

“With regard to his object, sir,” replied the agent of police, “that is not our object. First let us find him, and then we will ask him his object. It seems to me that with the information which we possess, the only thing to be done is to ascertain the various voituriers whose horses are absent at the present moment, and then to discover which is the person he employed; for there can be no doubt he would take post-horses for such a business. Leave that matter to me, sir, and depend upon it, before night, you shall have further, if not complete, information on the subject.”

“Can the people of the house where he lodged afford you no information?” demanded Lady Mary.

“They say, that from something he let drop,” replied the agent, “they suspect he has taken the road to Namur; but you see, milady, that is the very reason I should suppose he has gone in the opposite direction. A wily old fox like that would be sure to drop nothing but a false scent, as you say in England. However, you leave it to me—five hundred louis, you say? Fichtre! for that we would find the devil himself.”

Thus saying, the agent of the police took his leave, and soon after Henry Adair did the same, begging permission to call again in the evening to hear what further tidings had been received. “The happiness of my cousin Helen,” he said, “is more to me, Lady Mary, than my own, and

all my future years, which all my future years are very sure to need."

Lady Mary said all that was kind as well as all that was polite, and Henry Adair departed; but after spending an anxious and miserable day—for the excitement of seeking Helen had, while it lasted, somewhat withdrawn his thoughts from his own disappointment, which weighed upon him doubly as soon as that excitement was over—he returned at night, only to find that no tidings had yet been received. In the meantime, Brussels had been in a state of great confusion and agitation. A severe cannonade had been heard proceeding from two different quarters; and the certainty of a battle having been fought gave rise to a thousand different rumours. Toward midnight, two or three carts filled with wounded were brought in, and the first tenants took their place in those hospitals which were soon to be crowded with fresh sufferers.

From these, however, no very satisfactory information was to be obtained, as they had been wounded early in the battle, and having been found capable of bearing the journey, they had been sent by the surgeons from a field where they could do no further service. All they had to tell, therefore, was that the British and Belgian troops, few as they were, had maintained their position at Quatre-Bras, till they were carried off the field; and that fresh forces were arriving every moment. Nevertheless, there were not wanting many in Brussels to spread reports of the French success, nor many others to give willing credit to the tale. Some symptoms of disaffection were also exhibited, and that sort of movement and agitation was rife which gave the police quite sufficient to do.

When, however, on the morning of the 17th, Henry Adair found that Lady Mary had not again seen the agent on whom they depended for information, he proceeded himself to the bureau in search of him. The man acknowledged fairly that he had been so much occupied with other affairs, that he had not had time to devote to the object which they had in view; but he suggested, that if Henry Adair would inquire at the two first barriers on the roads towards Ghent, Mons and Namur, he might obtain some tidings which might guide them in their after-search. Henry Adair was indefatigable, and immediately ordering his horse, he rode out upon the high way to Ghent, but no tidings could he obtain; and returning to Brussels, he dined with his father, to whom he related not only the fact of Helen's disappearance, but also his suspicions of the lawyer,

and inquired if the peer could imagine any motive that could actuate Williamson in such a case. Lord Adair evaded the question, but he was evidently uneasy and alarmed; and, much to the surprise of his son, he was as eager that Henry should proceed upon his search as the other could be to do so. His dinner was dispatched with unusual rapidity; and scarcely was the dessert put upon the table, when he exclaimed—"Now, Henry—now, my dear boy—it is getting late; take my horse if your own be tired—but take care that you do not fall in with any parties of the French. They say that Wellington is certainly falling back."

"I will be very careful, sir," replied young Adair; "but do not make yourself uneasy if I do not return to-night, as, if I am late, I shall sleep at Hal. I shall take my servant with me."

"Take mine, too," cried Lord Adair, "I shall not want him—I do not want a servant—I could do very well without one." But his son declined; and after he was gone, the peer walked up and down the room for a moment in great agitation. "I was sure," he muttered, "that villain was plotting something—I am afraid he has more in his head—I am very wretched—very unhappy—I wish to God it had never been done!"

While the father was thus lamenting over the adamant, unchangeable past, the son rode on upon the road to Mons; inquiring as he went with a degree of accuracy and calm good sense, which could not have been anticipated from the usual reckless heedlessness of his character, into every particular which could throw light by any chance upon the facts of Helen's disappearance. It was not, nevertheless, till he had nearly reached the small town of Hal, that he obtained the slightest information which seemed to bear upon the subject of his inquiry. There, however, in speaking with the keeper of one of the tolls, the man looked up in his face with a smile—

"You are upon the wrong road, sir," he replied, in answer to his inquiries; "at least, if I am not mistaken. On the night of the 15th, about half-past eleven, I was over with my brother, who keeps the first barrier near the little village of Ixelles. There was a man on horseback stood near half an hour by the bar, and then came down the hill a carriage at full speed. At first we thought it was some of the generals going to join the army; but the horseman, as soon as he saw it, paid the toll for the carriage, and for."

two more horses besides, and then rode on after it as fast as he could go. As it went by, we saw in by the lamp; and there was one woman in it, if not two. There was a foot-man behind, too; and I have little doubt but that was the very carriage you are asking for."

Henry Adair doubted not either; but fearful of his own hasty disposition, he asked several other questions, which only served to strengthen his conviction. "And now, my good friend," he said, giving the man a couple of louis for his pains, "that is for your information."

"But tell me further, as you seem to be a shrewd personage, and well acquainted with these roads, what would you advise me to do in order to overtake these people?"

"Why, a thousand to one, sir, you will not have to go far," replied the man. "The French are advancing on every side, we hear, and were doing so even on that night; so that it is scarcely possible they could get on without falling in with some of the French corps; and if they did that, they would not get much further."

"Why, how so?" demanded Henry Adair. "The French would not injure or insult a lady, surely!"

"Oh no, not that, my young gentleman," answered the barrier-keeper; "but they might take a fancy to the carriage, and still more probably to the horses. I served long in the French army myself, and I know them. So if you will take my advice, as it is growing dark, you will sleep to-night somewhere here; not at Hal, for that is as full as it can hold of your troops and officers already. But if you strike up that path, you will find a farm-house, where they will give you a good bed and a good supper—it belongs to my uncle: and then to-morrow morning, you can get a man to show you across to the Charleroi road—but keep behind your own posts, or you may fall in with the French; and seeing an Englishman in plain clothes, may take you for a spy, and hang you without ceremony. On the Charleroi road you will hear more, depend upon it; but if you do not hear about Genappe, or a little further on, go back to Brussels, and inquire after a man called Pierre Duchesne, for I will swear they were his horses."

Henry Adair paused, looked at his watch, calculated, and finding that it was so late he could do little with the police that night if he even returned to Brussels at once, and that if he sat out again by four the next morning, he might make a long round, and yet reach the capital early—he determined to follow the advice of the toll-keeper.

He accordingly took the path the man pointed out; found the farm, met with a civil reception, and the good supper which had been promised; and was then shown to a chamber as clean as it is possible to conceive, with flooring off which one might have dined, if it had not been strewn with fine white sand.

There he cast off his clothes, ordered himself to be called at three, and lay down to rest; but rest he got none, for the mind of poor Henry Adair was in a state of excitement from the struggle of many an emotion which set sleep at defiance. The mere agitation of having gained the first absolute and certain tidings of Helen Adair was enough to banish sleep from his eyelids, though the feeling of having done so was for a moment delightful; but when reflection told him that it was not for himself that his hopes of regaining her were excited—that his efforts all tended to place her in the arms of a rival—he writhed under the thought. Yet, strange to say, he never even asked himself whether he should abandon the pursuit. To give Helen Adair happiness, might indeed be to inflict excess of pain upon his own heart; but the reward was greater than the effort, and he hesitated not.

Well, the night went by, and early on the following morning, though not so early as he had intended, Henry Adair set out, guided by a man whom he hired at the farm-house. Two or three questions from the young Englishman were quite sufficient to make the peasant as communicative as could be wished; and Henry Adair soon found that he was approaching the rear of the British army, drawn up for the purpose of battle. His heart yearned to ride on and view the coming strife: his mind was but too well in harmony with such a sight—but still he resisted, thinking that he would not give way to such a foolish inclination, but would pursue his search for Helen Adair even with the battle sounding in his ears. "Let the mad insects fight on:" he thought, "I have nothing to do with their strife—let them fight on!" But still, notwithstanding all this, his heart yearned to join the rest, at least as a spectator; and as he rode forward he listened with an eager ear for the sound of the first cannon.

Occasionally, as the morning advanced, and he proceeded along the tortuous and somewhat tedious way from Hal to Waterloo, the report of musketry might be heard; and twice he turned down the lanes to the right to gain a momentary sight of the English army. A general view,

however, he could not obtain, though once or twice he fell in with a regiment on the extreme right ; and from one spot, where the ground sloped downwards, he beheld large, dark masses of cavalry and infantry hanging on the edge of the opposite heights. The space between the upland on which he stood, and that which was thus crowned, seemed very nearly vacant ; though, here and there, a small party of the British troops might be seen winding about in the ravines below. Henry Adair tore himself away from the sight, however, and hurried on, though the roads were so execrable from their soft nature and the heavy rain, that at every step his horse sunk fetlock deep in mud. At length, after a fatiguing ride, he reached the village of Waterloo about ten o'clock ; and proceeding to the little inn, as the first means of winning an aubergiste's heart, he ordered all that could be had for breakfast. Everything, however, was in confusion and disarray, both from the past and the future, as the English general had fixed his head-quarters at the inn on the preceding night, and as the approaching battle had terrified almost all the women from the village. Little, therefore, was to be procured at the auberge, except some eggs and wine for himself, and corn for his horses ; and as soon as Henry Adair began to question the inn-keeper, he found that even less information of the kind he wanted was to be obtained than provisions. The man's head was so full of the British army, the staff of the Duke of Wellington, and the battle—which he declared had already begun—that he could and would talk of nothing else.

The eggs were as long in being boiled, as if they had been to be made in the first instance ; and scarcely were they upon the table when the dull, heavy roar of a single cannon told that the battle had now begun indeed. It was evidently very near ; but the moment after a more distant roar was heard, which was echoed again by the British guns, and Henry Adair could resist no longer.

" Let the horses be brought out as soon as they have fed," he said ; and when, after about an half hour's delay, they appeared before the door, he turned to his servant, saying, as he thought but just, " I am going to see the battle ; if you do not like it, you need not come with me."

" Oh yes, sir," replied the servant, " I should like to have a lick at those Frenchmen, too ;"—and master and man, putting their horses into a canter, were soon upon the field of battle.

CHAPTER XXVI.

To Henry Adair, as he stood on a little height, not very far to the right of the English centre, viewing the field of Waterloo about twelve o'clock on the 18th of June, little was to be gathered from what he beheld. He could indeed see column after column of the French advancing against that particular spot, and he could well understand the importance of the post to the British army. He could see also flashes of flame and volumes of smoke issue forth from the contested point; but he could not at all divine which party were gaining the advantage of the other. Still, however, the interest in his breast was growing intense, and he could not but fear that the immense force of the French, which was pouring down upon the small British advanced post, would overwhelm the little knot of his countrymen, who, when the smoke for an instant cleared away, might be seen in the gardens and orchards of the château. At that moment, however, the Duke spoke a word to one of the officers near. The other galloped off, and the very next instant a battery on the right opened its fire upon the French column which was advancing upon Hougoumont by the little cross road from La Belle Alliance to Merke Braine.

The Duke kept his eye for a moment fixed upon the column, the head of which was instantly thrown into confusion by the English fire. "Pretty service!" he said; "Very pretty service!" and turned his eye at once towards the left, where the French battalions were beginning to be agitated, as if to commence a second attack there. Henry Adair rode up closer; and during the whole of the day continued as near to the General as he could get, certain of seeing there as much of the battle as it was possible for any one to behold. But even there to an inexperienced eye much was confused and unintelligible.

Henry Adair saw nothing but column after column of the enemy advance against the British position—he saw the charging masses of cavalry hurled in fury against the squares, and recoil, dashed back like waves from off a rock. He saw the British heavy brigade mingle in deadly

strife with the French cuirassiers, and he saw the imperial guard marching boldly on up the ravines upon the left, and still as they reached a certain point fall man over man, swept down by the terrific fire of the English guns. Step by step he had advanced as the day went on, till he had insensibly become mingled with the staff of the Duke of Wellington; and in the course of the battle, as the shot flew about them thickly, and many of the aides-de-camp were carried off wounded, and many were dispatched at once to different parts of the field, he found himself twice or thrice left totally alone with the commander-in-chief. He was slightly acquainted with him, but the Duke only spoke to him on two occasions; once when having no one else to send, he begged him to carry a message to a regiment near, and once when in the midst of the fight he exclaimed, "A gallant old fellow, 'pon my soul. That is a relation of yours, sir—Colonel Adair with the — regiment. See, they have brought their right shoulders forward, and are clearing the field."

It were endless, however, to tell—not all the events of the battle—but even all that Henry Adair himself beheld, and the emotions which were called up in his bosom by the sight. Three times he marked Lacy in the midst of the strife, and twice again he saw Colonel Adair with his hat off, and his white hair streaming in the wind, leading on his regiment wherever danger was to be met, or honour to be gained; and at length when the French line was seen broken and shaken in every part, and the Duke himself led on the British to the last general decisive charge, Henry Adair could resist no longer, but putting his horse into a canter, rode on with the rest.

At the town of Genappe he first drew his rein; and then with a heart still beating, and feelings still agitated with all the excitement of the scenes through which he had passed, he turned his horse's head back towards the field of Waterloo. It was now night. The moon, full and splendid, was shining out as he reached the plain, and at first few scenes could appear more calm and tranquil than the spot which had been so lately covered with strife, confusion, and fury. The vanquished had fled, the victors had passed on, the time was too short for the human vultures, who follow such scenes, to be yet very busy in stripping the fallen, and under the clear sweet light of the gentle moon, the dead and the dying were all that remained upon the field of battle.

He had now just reached the middle of the plain at the foot of Mont St. Jean ; and quitting the road he wandered into the open fields towards Hougomont. There was much corn standing on the ground ; and though it had been beaten down in every direction, yet it still rose in tufts here and there, casting long shadows in the moonlight, and deceiving the eye, making it seem that the patches of dead were more numerous than they really were. But still they were numerous enough ; and every two or three hundred yards came a spot where the slaughter had been more terrible, and where the corpses were thicker. An interest, a curiosity which he could not resist, caused Henry Adair, as he passed each group of dead, to gaze upon the faces that were exposed to the moonlight, and try to trace whether the cold features were at all familiar to his eye. As he got further from the road he heard more groans, and approaching the spot from whence they proceeded, found a French cuirassier writhing on the ground beside his horse, which had fallen by another shot. The young Englishman endeavoured to raise him up, but even while he did so, the man's face became convulsed, and he sunk back to the ground quite dead. It was all so dreadful, that he determined to turn to the road ; but as he was in the act of executing this resolution, he heard voices speaking low, and one said, " Shall I give him a shot ? "

" No, no ! " replied the other. " See what he is about first. He does not seem to me to be plundering. He may be one of the surgeon's people. "

" No, no ; they have all got torches, " replied the other voice. " I think I could hit him with my left hand. "

" Is there any one wounded there, to whom I can bring assistance ? " said Henry Adair, perceiving that he was the object of the conversation he overheard.

" Why, that is behaving like a gentleman, " said one of the voices ; and guided by it, he approached a little tuft of standing corn some ten yards from where he stood. But the voice cried out aloud, " Stand off ! stand off ! and tell us first who you are, for you may be such another rascal as went by just now ! "

" My name is Adair, " replied the young Englishman ; " and my only object is to give you any help I can, my good friend. "

" Why, surely, it is young Mr. Adair, " cried the voice again. " Here is your cousin here, sir—your cousin, Colonel Adair. Here we are met together for the first

time these two and twenty years ; he, the son of my father's old landlord, and I the son of his father's old tenant at Brockley farm, lying together on the same field, and brought down, for aught I know, by the same shot—though that could not be either, colonel, for you came down just as you were charging near me, and I had been there some ten minutes.”

“ But are either of you much hurt ? ” cried Henry Adair, approaching and gazing down upon Colonel Adair and Adjutant Green as they lay together on the edge of a little dip of the ground, at the bottom of which were ten or twelve dead bodies.

“ Why, no, I trust not,” replied the veteran, looking up. “ I have a ball through my leg which prevents me from standing, even for a moment ; and this worthy gentleman, strange to say, is wounded precisely in the same way, but unfortunately has also got his right-hand disabled.”

“ But I will go up to the village directly,” replied Henry Adair, “ and bring assistance to carry you up to the surgeons. You may bleed to death.”

“ On, no ! ” replied Green, “ I’ve tied up the colonel’s leg so that it cannot bleed, and my blood stopped of itself long ago. No ; if you will just take up that musket and cartouche-box, and stay with us till day breaks, you will do us a greater favour ; for just before you came there was one of those vermin came by that plunder the dead, and they make very free with the wounded too. He put a bayonet into that poor fellow, who was not quite dead. We were too much alive for that ; but if two or three of them were to come together, as I’ve seen them in Spain, they’d cut our throats for the epaulettes and what the colonel has in his pocket. So if you will just stay by us till morning, we shall do very well.”

“ That I will do with all my heart,” replied Henry Adair, taking up and recharging the musket which Adjutant Green had pointed out ; and then sitting down beside the two wounded men, he held out his hand to Colonel Adair, with that unfettered sincerity which always led him to say or do whatever his heart prompted at the moment. “ Colonel Adair,” he said, “ I am happy to meet you. I have long wished to do so, but never had an opportunity of even seeing you till the Duke of Wellington pointed you out to me this morning, when you were charging across the field.”

"Very kind of him so to notice me," replied the veteran, evidently flattered; "but to tell you the truth, I avoided the only occasion in which we were likely to meet, namely, when you were staying at the house of my attorney, Williamson, and expressed a desire to see me. My motive for so doing, young gentleman, was no personal ill-will either to yourself or your father, but simply because I had understood that the terms of the will under which you inherit a large portion of your property, strictly forbid your seeking ever to hold any communication with me."

"Those terms affect my father, sir, not me," replied Henry Adair; "and the only object which I had was to express how grieved I was that to enrich us more than was needful you should be deprived of that which you had been taught to expect. Words I know are nothing; but should ever that fortune fall into my hands I shall certainly never make use of any part of it, holding that I have no right to do so."

"That will be a pity, sir!" replied Colonel Adair. "I of course can never benefit by it. It is gone from me; and very justly. It was promised to me certainly by my grandfather; but I displeased him in the matter of my marriage, as you well know, and he had every right to change his mind, and leave it to whom he pleased."

"Nay, nay! I think not!" replied Henry Adair; "but perhaps that is what they would call one of my strange notions. But I hold, sir, that every part of a man's moral sensations are as much his property as the gold in his purse. Thus, if we have once raised expectations in another which we do not fulfil, we commit a double crime. We lie in doing not the thing which we have promised to do, and we rob in taking away a hope and pleasures that we had created in the breast of another."

"I could smile," said Colonel Adair, "if the burning of this leg of mine would let me, not in any contempt of such ideas, but at their novelty. However, I cannot agree with you in this instance. Such promises are always considered to be conditional by him who makes them, and ought, at least for his own peace, to be looked upon in the same light by him to whom they are made."

"Ay, sir!" replied Henry Adair. "Such are the words I know whereby men salve over to their consciences the doing of great wrongs. Did your grandfather, when

he made you a promise of that portion of his wealth which had been accumulated in India—did he bargain that you were to marry the first ‘pretty painted piece of Eve’s flesh’ that he should choose for you? No, no! He promised you that which he did not give; he excited expectations which he failed to fulfil; and—though others think differently, and Heaven forbid that I should say my father, thinking as he does, is acting wrong—yet I should as soon avail myself of one stiver of that wealth as I would become a receiver of stolen goods.”

“Hark!” cried Adjutant Green; “there are more guns!” and a few distant shots were heard breaking the stillness. The sounds of horses’ feet, too, were distinguished echoing along over the causeway.

“What are those lights moving about there along the side of the hill?” demanded Henry Adair.

“Either the surgeons’ assistants, and people seeking the wounded,” replied colonel Adair, “or some of the same plundering villains as the one who lately passed.”

“No, no, colonel,” rejoined Green, “they would trust to the moonlight! Those are either some of the surgeons’ folk, or the people come out of the towns and villages to give what help they can, God bless them! It has been a glorious day indeed, colonel, as you were saying just before Mr. Adair came up, and we ought not to mind losing a good drop of our blood for a share in such a victory.”

“Mind!” cried Colonel Adair; “sir, I am proud of every drop I have shed on such a field as this. The loss of a limb would not have been too high a purchase for the privilege of having fought here to-day.”

“Nevertheless, my dear sir,” said Henry Adair, “in order to ensure that you may not pay such a severe price for a pleasure already enjoyed, I had a great deal better go up to those good people with the lights, and bring some of them down to remove you to the village. You have here the musket to defend yourselves in case of annoyance, and I will be back directly.”

“Not to the village!” said Colonel Adair; “it is full to the head already, depend upon it. If you could get some of them to bring down a bell-tent or two here, and send one of the surgeons, he might do a great deal of good, for about a hundred yards up the ravine there are five or six of my poor fellows who fell in that last charge, and of course we could not wait to see whether they were wounded or not.

We can lie here very well for the night amongst this good dry corn, and to-morrow we may get back to Brussels. My leg is very painful I do not deny. A young man bears a wound better than an old one, I find."

Henry Adair set out directly, taking care to mark the spot well, and every step that he took away from it also, in order to retrace his way back. As every one knows, the train of baggage which followed the Duke of Wellington's armies was never considerable; but Adair found each individual of the multitudes who were now assembled on the heights, so eager and willing to assist the wounded, that the colonel's wishes were no sooner expressed than attended to. Tents were instantly procured, and though it was impossible to convey beds to the spot, yet several bear-skins and a quantity of straw were carried down to render the wounded men as comfortable as possible. About ten were collected within a hundred yards of the spot where Colonel Adair lay; but one poor fellow, who was removed to the same tent with that officer and Adjutant Green, died under the hands of the surgeon, who, by the colonel's desire, was attending to his more severe wounds in the first instance. The medical officer then extracted the ball which had remained in Colonel Adair's leg, dressed the wounds of Adjutant Green, and, after giving them both hopes of speedy recovery, left them to the care of Henry Adair, and one of the peasants from the village, and hastened on to attend upon the rest. His strict injunction, however, was to keep as quiet as possible; and in about an hour, notwithstanding the pain of their wounds, both Colonel Adair and Adjutant Green, exhausted with loss of blood and severe fatigues, fell into a sound though somewhat disturbed sleep.

Henry Adair slept not, but watched beside them, while the light of a lantern, which had been left, shone dimly round the tent, casting a faint and ghastly glare upon all the objects that it contained.

CHAPTER XXVII.

When the first light Colonel Adair was awake. "Is the Adjutant asleep still?" he asked, after having held a short conversation, in a low tone, with his young cousin.

"No, colonel!" answered Adjutant Green. "I woke almost as soon as you began talking with Mr. Henry; but I have had a good nap though—for which I was just thanking God, as well as for all his kindness towards us yesterday, which indeed, I think, has been extremely great."

"Great indeed, Mr. Green; great indeed!" replied Colonel Adair. "Great to our army, great to each of us individually, and great, I doubt not, to Europe in general."

"To be sure it was," rejoined the adjutant; "and very grateful I am to Him for having allowed me to have a share in such a victory, and yet let me off with only two pitiful wounds, that will turn out flea bites, no doubt. Indeed, I dare say I ought to be grateful for them too, if I knew all. I always think, somehow, that God Almighty has an idea of doing us good in the very worst that befalls us—sometimes to our hearts and souls, you know, colonel—sometimes to our bodies and fortunes—at least I always think so; and I even fancy that we shall find, when we get to the other world, that death itself has come just at the right time."

"You are, there, a good Christian, Green," replied Colonel Adair, "and I doubt not a good metaphysician, for to my mind the one implies the other. But what would you infer?"

"Why, I was thinking, colonel, even before this young gentleman came up last night," the honest soldier went on, "I was thinking that it was a very extraordinary thing that a ball should go through my boot and ankle into my horse and kill him dead, poor fellow, and tumble us both over just here, leaving me so that I could not get up; and then that ten minutes after, up you should come, at the head of your men, and those French fellows of the Guard should just fire up the hollow way, and bring you down

within ten yards of me, and neither of us much hurt either; and then that I should know you by your voice, as you called to your men to go on and drive them to the devil, and creep down to help you, and meet you here after so many years. I was thinking it was all very strange indeed, when suddenly something happens that makes it stranger still. Up comes this young gentleman, whom you never saw in your life before, but I have seen often—up he comes—and he's not in the service either—but up he comes, wandering about in the quiet-looking moonlight, over the place where we had been fighting hard all day, and he sits down with us, and begins to talk about the property of your grandfather—the East India fortune as we used to call it, at Brockley; and he explains it all as clearly as possible, and yet I cannot understand a word of it. So I think that it is evident that we did not thus fall in with each other without some object to be answered, and therefore, though it may seem very impertinent, gentlemen, I am resolved that I'll hear all about it, if you please, just to pass the time till the doctor comes round to us."

"I do not know how you mean all about it, Mr. Green," replied Henry Adair; "I dare say you know more about it than I do myself, as I remember your visiting my father at different times, and seeming to be well acquainted with the whole history of my family—I was very young when my father succeeded his grandfather, and all that I ever heard about the matter myself was in my early youth, though I have not forgotten it yet."

"Ay! I dare say I do know more about it," answered the adjutant, "but still I should like to hear it all over again, for it seems to me that one or both of you gentlemen are under a mistake. And do not you forget, Mr. Henry, that I believe you to be as honest and free-hearted, ay and free-handed a young gentleman as ever crossed a horse, that's all! but still I think that there is some mistake, do you see?"

"No, no, Green!" answered Colonel Adair; "there is no mistake in the matter. The story to which we were alluding is simply this: my grandfather, after having accumulated a large fortune in India, returned to Europe on his elder brother's death, and succeeded to his title and estates. He had two children, my uncle, his eldest son, and my father. Both his children died before him, and as my grandfather at one time thought that the family

estates were sufficient to keep up the dignity of the elder branch of the house, he promised to leave to me the fortune he had made, as it is called, in India. I offended him, however, in my marriage; he would never see me after, and wrote to tell me that he had left the whole to my good cousin, now Lord Adair, with a proviso that he was never willingly to see me either. His will proved to be exactly in the same terms as his letter, and therefore—"

"Ay, sir!" interrupted Green, "but what became of the will he made after? of the last will of all, when he was dying?"

"I never heard of such a will!" said Colonel Adair, in some surprise. "The will of which I speak was made nearly a year before his death."

"Oh, yes, I know that," rejoined Green, "I know that as well as you do; I was there when it was made, and heard all about it; and so the other will has never been heard of, hasn't it? Well, I did think it mighty strange, and so did Newton, Captain Lacy's servant, when we talked over the matter. We talked about it only the other day in Brussels. But I'll tell you all about it, colonel, so listen; and you listen, Mr. Adair, for I know more of it than any of you; and you, who are a young, high-spirited fellow, may have to do justice in the business yet. Well, then, to begin—One night—no, but first I should tell you, that after my father failed in the farm at Brockley, near Stoke Norton, you know I, who was then but a young lad, and could write a good hand, was taken over to the Park to be clerk to the steward—but you know all that, colonel. Well, one night when my old lord was very ill, and the steward was ill in bed too, I was had into his room—that is, my lord's—more than once to give some accounts; and because the doctor said he was dying, and that there was no time for a Mr. Snipe, who had been sent for, to come from London, this fellow Williamson, who was then a young lawyer just set up at Stoke Norton, was brought over to settle the old gentleman's affairs, for he liked very much to have everything straight. Well, Mr. Adair, my lord, your father, was at the hall as well as Williamson; and after I had done all that I had to do, I was going away home about eleven o'clock, because I did not sleep in the house, when down came Williamson and bade me stop and come up with him, saying that my lord wanted me to witness the signature of some papers. Well, up I went, and into my

lord's room through the dressing-room—you remember the little dressing-room, colonel, and how it used to smell of *maréchal* powder—and there was my lord in bed, a sad sight to see was the old man——”

“Was my father there?” demanded Henry Adair, with no small eagerness.

“No, sir, no,” answered Green; “he was not in the room then. There was nobody but my old lord and the lad Willy Newton, who is now Captain Lacy's servant, and who used then to sit up with my lord o' nights, for all the other people were tired out: and when I came in my old lord said, ‘Read it over again, Mr. Williamson, I will have it read over again.’ So then Williamson told me and Newton to go into the other room; and though the old gentleman said never mind, we might stay, and all that, Williamson put us out; but we thought it no harm to use our ears,—as my lord wished it. Well, he read the first part in a good loud voice, about its being the last will and testament of John Lord Adair and a great deal more; but then he began to read low, and my lord bawled out to him to read louder, because he was very deaf, which was true enough, and so he was forced to read loud, and we heard all. Well, in that will, I am ready to take my oath, he revoked all other wills, and left the whole of the India property to you, colonel, mentioning where the money lay, and all about it; and when it was done we were called in, and I, and Willy Newton, and Williamson, all signed it as witnesses. Well, the matter passed off, my old lord died about three o'clock in the morning, and then my lord your father was very civil to me, and after the funeral he and Williamson set off in his carriage to prove the will, as they said, which had been read to some gentlemen in the parlour before; and I asked Williamson, too, as I met him in the hall, if I should go with them to prove the will, but he said there was no occasion, and I heard no more of the matter. The steward died not long after; and as I was his clerk, and not belonging to the household, I was out of employment, and Williamson came and persuaded me to go into the army, telling me that if I did, and behaved well and distinguished myself in the service, my lord your father, Mr. Henry, would get me on, for his interest lay that way; and, to speak truth, so he has done, and has kept his word in that matter nobly.”

“This is a very extraordinary story, Mr. Adair,” said his veteran cousin; but Henry Adair was leaning forw-

with his elbow on his knee and his eyes buried in his hands, and he made no reply. Colonel Adair went on, "And, pray, Green, when was it that any idea first struck you of the property not having come to me?"

"Why, not till three months ago," replied Green. "You lived always in the country, sir,—I was always on duty—I was four years in the East Indies—a good many years in Spain; and when I did come to London, I found my Lord Adair not living as if he had any very enormous fortune either. So it was not till the other day almost, when we were in London, that Captain Lacy, who is the noblest hearted man, officer or private, now living, was very kind to my sister, and my sister's children; and I went to thank him by his permission, when who should I meet with in his servant but Willy Newton, who signed the will with me; and he it was told me that he had been to you that morning with a note from his master, who was a friend of yours; and he said to me, 'I'll tell you what, Mr. Green, there is something I don't understand here. If the colonel has ever had that fortune he has spent it all, which seems to me a strange thing, for he was never an extravagant man.' So we both determined to watch how matters went, and speak out if needful. I afterwards heard more from your own daughter, colonel, Miss Helen, at Ghent, where she and Lady Mary were very kind to me when I got hurt, but I never could make anything out clearly till this very night."

"How strangely such events come round!" replied Colonel Adair, musing.

"Strangely enough, indeed!" answered Green, "and that was what I was saying, colonel. I felt sure that you and I and young Mr. Henry here could not be brought together in such an unlikely place for no purpose; and as for him—for Mr. Henry I mean—I have known him since he was a little boy, and I'll answer for it that he is one to see right done."

"As far as lies in my power," replied Henry Adair suddenly looking up. "As far as lies in my power, so help me God. Colonel Adair, give me your hand, and forgive me my share of any injustice that may have been done to you. On my honour it has neither been with my knowledge or consent, and I believe on my soul that it has not been with my father's either. I speak not alone thus because he is a gentleman, and, I trust, a man of honour, but I judge from events which have occurred concerning

your own family, Colonel Adair, since you left Brussels, to which Mr. Green's story affords me the first clue, and which I think indicate that my father is totally ignorant of the villany which has been practised."

"Concerning my own family!" said Colonel Adair, who felt much for his young cousin's painful situation. "I have but one child, sir, my daughter, whom I left certainly in Brussels; but I do not see how anything can have occurred to her which affects this matter."

"Finding you here, sir, wounded and suffering," replied Henry, "I had determined not to mention what I now feel myself forced to speak of. I am very sorry to tell you that your daughter has been inveigled, under false pretences, into a carriage, and has been taken away from Brussels by some persons whose names we do not know." Forgetting his wound, Colonel Adair started suddenly off the bearskin on which he was lying, but instantly sunk back again with a low groan, and Henry Adair went on to give him what comfort he could. "Every means," he said, "are even now being used to discover where she is, but all that we have yet found out tends to prove that old villain—whose rascality I have long been convinced of—that old villain Williamson to be the culpable person in the business; and depend upon it his motive is some dark and villanous design regarding this very will, which it seems he has concealed. I, and Lacy also, first suspected the son; but it seems he is with his regiment, and the police of Brussels have satisfied themselves that the father is the person. I have obtained information which leads me to believe that he has carried Miss Adair either to Namur or Paris; or, perhaps, from the position of the armies before the late battle, has been forced to return upon Brussels. I was myself engaged in the search, when I was tempted to look on upon the battle; but the moment I see you safely on your road to Brussels I will renew my inquiries, and, depend upon it, will never abandon them till I have both discovered Miss Adair, and wrung from the very heart of that old scoundrel the truth concerning the will."

"O God, sir, cannot you go on now!" cried the old officer, in agony for his child; but Henry Adair explained to him that it would be necessary for him to return to the village of Waterloo, in order to find his horses; and that it would be scarcely possible for him to proceed in advance of the army, which had not yet marched. Colonel Adair then asked a thousand questions, and received more in

detail than it may be necessary to give here, an account of all that had occurred in regard to Helen since the evening of the 15th. At length the surgeon returned, a cart was procured, and the veteran, together with Adjutant Green and the others who were not very severely wounded, were removed to the little town of Waterloo, where their wounds were again examined and dressed. As the village, however, was crowded with the more severely wounded, Colonel Adair and his companion determined to proceed at once to Brussels; and a tolerably convenient vehicle being procured, they departed for the capital about twelve o'clock. In the meantime, Henry Adair had found his servant and horses, and writing a hasty note to his father to assure him of his safety, he entrusted it to Adjutant Green, begging him to send it to the peer immediately on arriving in Brussels, while he himself proceeded with the search which had been interrupted by the battle of Waterloo. He, at the same time, begged Colonel Adair to take means to inform the police of the Belgian capital that the man named Pierre Duchesne was supposed to have furnished the horses to old Williamson, and to desire that a messenger, with any information which might be elicited from that person, should be sent after him to Namur without loss of time.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

I WILL now at once step to Paris, and stride over all that interval of time which lies between the 19th day of June, 1815, and the 10th day of the month of July in the same memorable year. The whole capital was in a ferment of joy on the entrance of Louis, and its deliverance from the fear of foreign bayonets; and as changes of sensation generally rush into extremes, those who had been flaming in wrath over the defeat of Waterloo, who had found out with General Drouet that the English had won the battle merely by timidity, and who had declared they would shed the last drop of their blood in defence of Paris, were now aping the dress and manners of the adversaries they affected to laugh at, and making the streets ring with palinodies, not unaptly rendered by Beranger in the words "*Vivent nos amis, nos amis les ennemis.*"

It was just in the cream of the effervescence that Henry Adair, in walking along the Rue de la Paix, towards ten o'clock at night, which was within half an hour after his arrival in the capital, suddenly confronted no other a person than Ensign John Williamson, who instantly held out his hand to him. By this time he had become fully and thoroughly convinced that Mr. Williamson, sen., attorney-at-law, was wholly and solely culpable in the matter of Helen Adair's disappearance, and as he had heard from various officers with whom he had associated during the march of the army upon Paris, which march he had closely followed, that Ensign John Williamson had been with his regiment at Nivelles on the notable 15th of June, and had marched with it upon Quatre-Bras on the 16th, he exculpated him in his free and generous thoughts from all share in the offence of his father, and shook him heartily by the hand as an old acquaintance. The light of an illuminated window, which had been sufficient to enable the two young men to recognise each other, was not strong enough to display to them that they were both worn and haggard; but the voice of young Williamson, as he greeted Henry Adair, evinced at all events that he was agitated.

"I am very glad, indeed, to see you, Adair," he said; "do come with me, I am lodging here at the corner. If you had not come I do not know what I should have done."

"Lodging here at the corner!" said Adair, "why I thought your regiment was at Argentcuil; I was going there to seek you to-morrow: I wished to ask if you could give me any news of your father, as I want to see him."

"He is not here," replied the other; "but I will tell you more about him to-morrow. I was taken prisoner at Quatre-Bras, and am now only upon parol; but the matter is this—I have got into a quarrel here about a lady—I have been horsewhipped in the street, and am to fight to-morrow. Will you be my second, for all the officers, I know, are too far off to be found in such a hurry? I have named five o'clock, and the place, Montmartre, just behind where the French were in position. Will you consent? Do, my dear fellow, for old acquaintance' sake. I am sure I shall be killed, but that does not signify. Do go with me."

"Why, Williamson," replied the other, "you know very well that such a thing is quite contrary to all my principles. I would laugh the man to scorn who asked me to do such a stupid thing as to fight him; but I suppose you as a soldier must do it; and I as your old school-fellow must not refuse to go with you. But tell me one thing first. You say it is about a woman—now if you have seduced her, married or single, I will have nothing to do with the business."

"No," replied the other, "on my word, on my honour, it is nothing of the kind. But here is my hotel, will you come in and talk to me about it? I know I shall be killed—but that does not signify; I will shoot him too, or know the reason why."

"I cannot come in with you at present," replied Henry Adair; "but if you will take my advice, Williamson, you will go home yourself, and think over the whole business. If you are in the wrong, do not fire at your opponent. If you think you will be killed—which of course you can know nothing about—prepare yourself for death both as a brave man and a Christian. Death has nothing terrible in it but the name, Williamson. It is but the cessation of one state of being—nothing more."

"Oh! I know all that," replied the other, impatiently, "and I do not fear death more than any other man. I

showed that, at Quatre-Bras, I think—but do come in and talk to me about it.”

“I cannot at this moment,” replied Henry Adair, “because I wrote a note this morning to beg a friend of mine to call upon me at my hotel at a quarter past ten. If you would like me to come after he is gone—if I can give you any comfort, or any support, I will certainly return in an hour, or an hour and a half.”

“O hang it, no!” replied the other, “I don’t want comfort or support! I shall go to bed and sleep, so that my hand may be steady to-morrow morning. I have ordered the cabriolet at half-past four, so do not be later, pray. You see the house—Number 104, au premier—but my servant shall be at the door—good night. I must write one letter.”

Thus saying, he entered the house, and Henry Adair muttering to himself no very pleasant comment on the character of his school companion, returned to the inn where he had taken up his abode, and where a letter and a note were put into his hands. The letter was from his father, written evidently with an unsteady hand, and under great agitation of some kind; but it only contained two matters of importance, which were, first the information that tidings had been obtained by the police of old Mr. Williamson having certainly gone back to England, though by a circuitous route; and secondly, an injunction of the most pressing nature for Henry Adair to follow him, and by any means get Miss Adair out of his hands. A few words, however, with which the old lord ended his letter, struck his son more than all the rest. They were, “that man wishes to sell me, I am sure.”

“Sell me!” exclaimed Henry Adair. “Sell me! can it be possible?” And after gazing at the letter for a moment or two longer with a vacant eye, he dashed it down upon the table, and opened the note which had been given to him at the same time. It began:—

“MY DEAR ADAIR,

“I am sorry to say that business will not admit of my meeting you to-night in Paris as you wish: but if nothing occurs to prevent me from fulfilling my present intentions, I will call upon you to-morrow at one o’clock.

“Yours, ever,

“CHARLES LACY.”

Henry Adair's mind instantly reverted to the other letter, and after murmuring more than once, "Sell me! sell me!" he sat down, and covering his eyes with his hands, remained in that position for more than an hour. Then rising, he rang for his servant, ordered him to call him at four the following morning, and then cast himself but half undressed upon his bed. It needed no one, however, to rouse Henry Adair on the following morning, for sleep had never visited his eyelids, and towards three o'clock, finding the effort to obtain anything like slumber utterly vain, he rose, lighted a lamp, and dressed himself. By a quarter past four he was walking along towards the Rue de la Paix, with a heart sadly condemning the deed in which he was going to participate, and ere he reached the door of his former schoolfellow's abode, a hired cabriolet with a prancing horse and foreign servant dashed up to it. Walking in—for the door was by this time open—he went up to the first floor, where he found a servant who showed him the rooms of the person he sought; and in a moment after he was in the presence of the young officer, whom he found leaning with his head upon his hand, and no slight traces of anxiety—perhaps we might say anguish—apparent on a countenance which, as it was never intended for the expression of any strong passion, seemed the more fearfully changed by that which now agitated it.

"I have been waiting for you, Adair," he said, starting up from his reverie as the other entered. "Come along! let us be the first on the ground, at all events! Was the cabriolet at the door?"

Henry Adair answered in the affirmative, and the other without any more words moved towards the staircase; but when he reached the further side of the room he paused, and gave an anxious look round it, as if numbering the different objects it contained—it might be that he felt it was perhaps the last time he should ever see any of them. However, he walked on the next moment, and using no ceremony with his second, he went down-stairs before him, and approached the cabriolet. The servant was holding the horse's head, and saying, "You drive, Adair! I must keep my hand steady," young Williamson put his foot upon the step, and was getting in; but suddenly turning round to his servant, he exclaimed, "What the devil do you mean by putting the pistol-case on the seat? Who can sit there? Put it down underneath!"

The man sprang forward to obey, leaving the horse's

head free. It—a fiery, high-spirited animal—darted forward at full speed with the young Englishman, half in half out of the cabriolet. Henry Adair rushed up to stop it, but in vain. Williamson himself tried twice to catch the reins; but just as he was succeeding, the horse, sweeping like lightning round the next corner, dashed the wheel against the house. The cabriolet bounded off with a whirl, and at once the unhappy young man was pitched forward on his head. His feet were entangled in the reins, the horse set his hind hoof upon his chest, the cabriolet went over him, and had not the buckle luckily given way, he must have been dragged on through several streets, along which the horse ran in fury ere he could be stopped.

Henry Adair, the servants, and one or two lookers-on instantly ran up, but the unhappy youth's face and head were dreadfully cut, and covered with blood. The trace of the horses' hoof was left in mud and gore upon his chest, and he gave no sign of life whatever except by twice feebly lifting his hand with a sort of tremulous, convulsive motion. No time was lost ere a surgeon was sought, and one of the servants ran across the street to the house of Monsieur de Cl——x, while the rest of the persons assembled carried Williamson up to his own chamber, and laid him on his bed.

The old surgeon came at once with nothing but his dressing-gown cast over his night-clothes, and instantly examined the head of the unhappy young man, observing with satisfaction that he did not think there was any fracture of the skull; but when he came to open the bosom of his shirt, he shook his head with a grave look, saying—

“The sternum is dashed in as if with a cannon-ball; yet the pulse is to be felt, though but little; give me a sponge and some vinegar:” and he proceeded to wash the blood and dirt off the patient's face and head. The cold water revived him instantly, and he opened his eyes, gazing wildly and vacantly over the party by which he was surrounded. Then suddenly with a faint motion, he beckoned to Henry Adair, after endeavouring in vain to speak. Henry Adair bent down his head, and, after one or two efforts heard him pronounce, “Montmartre!—go;—go!—Tell them all this!” He understood what Williamson meant at once; but he still lingered for a moment till an impatient look from the other showed him that he did more harm by staying than any assistance he could give would compensate, and telling the old surgeon

to remain with his patient till his return, he hurried away.

Calling one of the fiacres which were now beginning to congregate in the streets, he ordered the coachman to drive as fast as possible to Montmartre, and having, on their first ill-starred expedition, set out with Williamson somewhat before the necessary time, he reached the heights only a few minutes after that appointed for the meeting. He knew not the exact spot, however, nor the persons he was to seek; but seeing, as he passed the little guingette at the top, a group of three gentlemen standing idly in an open space at some distance, he walked up towards them. As he came nearer, the figure of one of them struck him as familiar to his eye, and the next moment the gentleman turning round showed him the features of Charles Lacy. For a minute he doubted whether he had fallen upon the right party, but giving a glance to the others of whom the group was composed, he saw the well-known figure of a regimental surgeon, and lying hard by the open pistol-case with the mallet and other means of cramming those fatal and detestable instruments.

"Why, Adair!" cried Lacy, advancing, and shaking him by the hand, "what have you come here for? We are likely to have some serious business here, if an acquaintance of mine does not disappoint me."

"If you mean young Williamson," replied Henry Adair, "he certainly will disappoint you."

Lacy's lip curled. "I did not know," he said, "that he was coward as well as scoundrel."

"No, no! you do him wrong," said Henry Adair, "he cannot come, though he had every wish to give you the meeting here;" and in few words he rendered Lacy and the other two gentlemen, who by this time had come round, a brief account of the accident which had befallen young Williamson, and its consequences.

Lacy heard him in silence, but his was not a heart to listen unmoved to the sufferings of a fellow-creature, even though his hand but the moment before had been armed to meet the same being in deadly conflict.

"Well," he said, turning to the two gentlemen whom Adair had found with him, "I have only to thank you, gentlemen, for your company thus far, and for your good wishes. I do not deny that I am very glad the punishing of a scoundrel has been taken out of my hands, for it certainly is not a task I covet. But tell me, Adair, how comes

it that you, whom I left with such very opposite feelings, should now be acting as second to this fellow in such a business as this?"

"I have no idea of what the business is," replied Henry Adair, "or at least had none till I saw you here, which makes me suppose that it has some reference to my cousin, Miss Adair. I only met Williamson last night, and he asked me to be his second, but I never thought of inquiring either who was his opponent or what was the subject of quarrel."

"My dear Adair, you really should be more careful," replied Lacy; and then turning to his two companions, he said, "Gentlemen, if you will return in the carriage I will rejoin you in an hour or two, and in the meantime, colonel, do try whether it will not be possible to get me leave of absence for a month. I know it will be very difficult to manage, but if the duke is informed of all the circumstances I think he will consent, now that all the serious fighting is over."

"We must get him to give you despatches," replied the other, "that is the only way depend on it. He will give us no leaves of absence with sixty thousand men before him."

"Well, well, the despatches will do as well, since London is my object," replied Lacy. "But now I will bid you good-bye, and walk down the hill with my young friend here." Thus speaking, he put his arm through that of Henry Adair, and proceeded a little way in silence: but at length he said, "So, you did not know what was the cause of quarrel between me and this young Williamson. Why I told you, before I quitted Brussels, that I strongly suspected him of being the person who had so daringly and shamefully carried your cousin, Miss Adair, away, and feeling towards her as I do, and placed towards her in the situation in which I am placed, you might easily imagine that my first act, on seeing him, would be to horsewhip him soundly."

"True!" replied Henry Adair, "such was the conduct which I might expect, under those circumstances, from one of you men of the world, Lacy; but I had forgot that you might not know what I have learned since I saw you, namely, that this young man is not the person in fault, but rather his father, whom I believe to be the greatest villain living. He would cheat my own father, I believe, if such a thing were possible; but he it was who carried off Helen,

and not his son. I have proof both of the act and the motive, which I can give you."

Lacy shook his head doubtfully : he listened while Henry Adair proceeded, with his usual straightforward uncompromising candour, to tell not only what he had learned at Hal, and what he had heard from the agent of police at Brussels, but also the whole story which had been told him by Adjutant Green on the field of battle, together with the confirmation of the suspicions against old Williamson, which his father's last letter implied.

He had but one concealment in the whole, which was, that he did not mention the words which, in reading that letter, had made such an impression on his own mind, "That man wishes to sell me!" In fact, he had partly reasoned himself into believing that they meant nothing. The generosity of his own heart would not let him believe it possible that any consideration could induce his father to benefit by the spoils of another, and that other a relation—the very candour and straightforwardness of his whole mind made him reject as impossible the idea that his parent could be any sharer in the dark and tortuous schemes in which it seemed that the lawyer had involved himself. This being the case, by a natural process of the mind he took the same means, without knowing it, of deceiving Lacy that he used to deceive himself, and passing in general terms over much which might implicate his father, he told the whole story against Williamson boldly and at once. It is but fair to say, however, that had he been convinced his father was really guilty also, he would have told the same story with as great or greater frankness, for it was only the consequences of having deceived himself that impaired his sincerity towards others.

Lacy, on the contrary, was not to be deceived, but he perfectly understood the nature of Henry Adair's mind—he had a sort of intuitive perception of his feelings and motives ; for, to say the truth, his own were very similar, and were only varied by the possession of greater calmness—perhaps acquired by education—and stronger controlling powers of mind. He therefore perceived that Henry Adair's affection stood up as a shield before his father, and turned aside every arrow that reason directed against him ; but Lacy also saw at once that John Williamson, attorney-at-law, would never, without the knowledge and consent of Lord Adair, commit an act of deep turpitude by which Lord Adair was to be the only person

benefited. This conviction of course he did not express, and indeed his feelings run stronger in another direction at the moment, for though the question of the property might affect his own hopes in regard to Helen at an after period, by influencing Lord Methwyn's opinions respecting the alliance, yet his first anxiety was for her present situation, and he replied to Henry Adair's assurance, that the lawyer was the only person to blame, by saying, "Indeed, my dear Adair, you are mistaken. Though the account you give is very extraordinary, and the appearances against the old scoundrel are very strong, yet I have proof positive against the son. A party of the young guard, under a Captain Marc—'chef de bataillon,' in fact—surrendered to me after the battle of Waterloo, and wishing to show him any kindness I could, I made him sup with me—which he did very heartily. He was quite full of two things; the late battle of course first, and then a little romance, which he told me had happened at Quatre-Bras. A young lady in a carriage, he said, with four male attendants, and a female one, had fallen in with one of their advanced posts, on the night of the fifteenth. He commanded the post, which was strong, and on inquiry found that the young lady—who was as beautiful as the day, he said—no other in fact than Helen herself—had been carried away from Brussels against her will. He had instantly put the people who had done so under arrest, they declaring however that they acted under the orders of a Monsieur Williamson, and he had then given her and her maid an apartment in the house where he had taken up his quarters——"

"But how are you sure that this Monsieur Williamson was not the father?" demanded Henry Adair.

"You shall hear," replied Lacy. "The next day the battle began before the young lady was up, and he had the good fortune, he said, to capture in the very gardens of that house—into which they had thrown themselves, being left out of the square—part of a company of the —— regiment. Only one young officer was left alive, and on demanding his name he replied, Williamson. 'Et voila l'auteur de l'enlèvement!' cried my prisoner. He instantly accused young Williamson of the fact, it seems," continued Lacy, "when what do you think the scoundrel had the impudence to say? He declared that Helen was his wife, that she had left him on some foolish quarrel, and that he had had her carried off to get her away from

her own relations, who set her against him. He had the impudence to ask, and they had the folly to promise, that she should be sent on to Calais, where the young scoundrel said some of his own family would meet or send for her in case of the war being protracted. My informant, however, could tell me nothing more, except that the prisoners had been marched for Paris by the way of Mons, in order of course to bolster up Napoleon's pretended victories, with which he deceived the poor Parisians. He believed, Captain Marc said, that the lady had been sent on to Mons too, at her husband's desire; but he could not exactly tell, as he had himself been ordered to march immediately, and all he could do was to recommend the whole party to the care of one of Ney's *etat-major*. As soon as I could I got into Paris, and sought the young scoundrel through the whole of yesterday, but it was not till three o'clock that I found him, and then, after having tried in vain to make him tell where Miss Adair is to be found, I horsewhipped him half-way through the *Palais Royale*. The result of all this you know, and I feel sure that you look upon his conduct as I do; but still I think you had better not abandon the unhappy young man in his present state, for from what I hear he has no friends here, and his own regiment, in which of course he has some intimate acquaintances, is at a distance. I, of course, cannot take any notice of him, and besides, I am anxious to get back to London, passing through Calais. Colonel Adair is better, and is going, if not gone, back to London, but my poor friend Kennedy is dead, or dying, of his wounds in Brussels, so that I have no one to aid me in my search, or supply my place."

"I wish that I could do either for you," replied Henry Adair, "but, as you say, I must not abandon this unhappy young man. Perhaps even the terrible accident he has met with, and the near approach of death, which I am afraid is inevitable, may show him his folly and his wickedness, and make him do something to repair the wrong he has done. I will leave no persuasion untried; and in the meantime do not fail to let me know all your movements."

Lacy promised to comply, and having walked to the door of the hotel where Ensign John Williamson lay, and ascertained that he was somewhat relieved and quite sensible, he left Henry Adair to the performance of the task he had taken upon himself, and returned to his regiment.

CHAPTER XXIX.

WE will not dwell upon the many painful and fearful sights which the streets of Brussels presented during the two first days which succeeded the battle of Waterloo : they have been well chronicled elsewhere ; and it is only with what was passing in one solitary house in the midst of that fine city that we have to do. Even on the sixteenth, for the wind was southerly, the distant roar of the cannon had been heard in Brussels, and the knowledge that a struggle was taking place, on which the fate of Europe depended, kept every one, throughout the Belgian capital, in breathless expectation. The victory of Quatre-Bras raised hope high in the minds of those who felt an interest in the success of the Allies, but then, rumours of the defeat of Ligny, and tidings that Wellington had fallen back, spread consternation, and the anticipation of disaster. Then came the still more eventful day of Waterloo, and during the whole of that terrible morning, Mary Denham sat without occupation, listening to the cannon, and feeling, for the first time in life, what a mighty and overpowering thing is love. News from the battle of course poured in during its continuance, and rumour added and improved as much as might be ; at the same time the intensity of the interest excited broke down conventional reverence, and whenever anything important was learnt, some of the servants, unbidden, would appear to communicate it to the two ladies.

At length, towards eleven o'clock at night, the joyful tidings of a great victory—a great, a signal, a final overthrow of the enemy—reached Lady Mary, and gave hope fresh ground to build upon. But still, love and fear were but too close allies, and though Mary Denham lay down to rest, yet sleep visited not her eyes, and, early the next morning, she was up and dressed.

Her mind was now upon the wounded, and as she entered the breakfast-room she said to the butler, who was busily engaged in preparing for the meal, “ I wish, Harrison, that you would go with all the servants but one, and see if you can give any help to the wounded. There are five or six rooms unoccupied in this large house, and I am afraid the hospitals will be very full. You may bring any

of the wounded here that you think fit; and do, Harrison, inquire if all our friends are safe, my cousin Charles, and Colonel Adair, and—and—Sir Thomas Picton, and Major Kennedy."

"I will go immediately I have brought the water, my lady," replied the butler; "the groom and coachman say, that when they were out exercising the horses, they saw carts after carts of wounded coming in. But it's certain, my lady, that Bonyparty will never be able to hold up his head again. Some say, indeed, that he's taken."

In about an hour the butler returned with a note, directed in pencil, which came, he said, from Captain Lacy. It contained but few words:—

"DEAR MARY,

"We have gained a great victory, but at a dreadful sacrifice. I am afraid Colonel Adair is killed; I saw his regiment without him, in the end of the day. He behaved like a hero. Picton is dead. I am unhurt, and Kennedy is living, but nerve your heart well, my dear Mary, for he is wounded seriously; but still I have hopes may do well: the surgeons say that he has no mortal wound, though many. Perhaps, if you think there be no impropriety, he might be more comfortable in your house than an hospital.

"Yours very affectionately,

"CHARLES LACY."

"P.S. I have obtained information which may, I trust, lead me speedily to the discovery of our dear Helen, and to her recovery from the hands of the villain who has had the daring impudence to carry her off in so scandalous a manner."

The paper dropped from Mary Denham's hand, as she felt that the fate she had dreaded had overtaken her. She, who had fancied at one time that she should never feel what love is, who had believed her own heart cold and insensible, had been taught, at length, to feel with that deep intensity of affection that hearts, easily moved, seldom, if ever, know; and now, her beloved, her chosen, was the one to be selected by misfortune, to fall in the last fight of all the many he had seen, when the happiness of their mutual love was but a few weeks old to either of them. Mary Denham did not faint, nor shed tears, nor give any of the accustomed signs of grief, such as the world in general expects from people who sorrow; but she let the paper drop, and gazed on upon vacancy, while the mental eye took a survey of all that was sad and

dark, and bitter, in the present and the future. Calmly—sternly, I might say—she stood; and, as the first impulse of sorrowful thought is always selfish, she fancied herself the most miserable being, at that moment in existence. The next instant, however, she remembered Helen Adair; and that thought led back her mind to all its native generosity of feeling. There were others, she now felt, miserable in the world besides herself; and she was soon brought to comprehend that there might be others, too, far more miserable—others, whose minds as well fitted for deep feeling as her own, might have to bear up under accumulated sorrows, produced by that same battle, to which her own were dust in the balance indeed—who might at once have lost father and brother, as well as lover and friend, or who might have seen themselves, deprived, by one sad stroke, of affection, protection, and support.

Lady Pontypool, while her niece thus stood struck and gazing with an air of deep sadness, continued to look at her with the eyes of affection and curiosity; and in a moment after, when her mind had somewhat recovered its natural tone, Mary caught the expression of her aunt's countenance, and replied to it at once, "Here are sad news, my dear aunt, which Lacy gives me. Poor Helen's father is believed to be killed, and Major Kennedy so badly wounded that I see Lacy entertains but little hope——" The tears started to her eyes, but she dashed them away and went on, "Lacy wishes me to receive Kennedy here instead of letting him go to one of the hospitals, and I certainly shall do so."

"But, my dear Mary, will not that look strange?" exclaimed Lady Pontypool. "Indeed, Mary, people begin to talk already, and say you were going to marry Major Kennedy."

"Well then!" said Mary, "to make it not look strange, I will marry him on his bed of death, that I may nurse him as his wife, and mourn him as his widow:" and with the irrepressible tears gushing from her eyes, she rushed out of the room and sought a moment's solitude in her own apartments. In a few minutes, however, she returned, and throwing her arms round her aunt's neck, she said, "Forgive me, my dear aunt, for speaking so hastily; but I thought you must have seen long ago what my feelings are towards Kennedy, and what his are towards me."

"But, Mary," replied my aunt Pontypool, "you know I never see these things as other people do;" and she said

very true, for she never saw those things, and very seldom anything else, as other people do.

"Well, aunt," said Mary sadly, "at all events you never saw me behave to any other man as I have to him. But, however, I am resolved to do as ~~my~~ ^{Lady} suggests; for feeling towards Kennedy as I do feel, ~~and~~ attached to him by promises, which to my mind are as binding as if I were already his wife, I should think I was neglecting my duty if I were to suffer him to linger on in an hospital, without any care but from the hands of hirelings."

"Well, I am sure I do not object," replied Lady Pontypool; "and I really do think you had better marry him at once, as you say, and then people can have nothing to talk about. I dare say the ambassador's chaplain would perform the ceremony whenever you like."

Lady Mary smiled faintly; for though what she had said in regard to marrying Major Kennedy in his present state had been but an ebullition of feeling, without any real purpose of the kind, it gave her no pain to hear her aunt advocate it as a serious proposal. She rang the bell, however, and finding that the butler was still in the house, she gave directions, that if Major Kennedy could by any means be found, and could be moved, if he were in any of the hospitals, without danger, that he should be immediately brought to her house. Scarcely was the butler gone when the other servants, in consequence of her former orders, appeared before the porte cochère, with one of those large old lumbering carriages which permitted a sort of bed to be made up in it, by stretching planks from seat to seat. The noise which this occasioned, for the house was situated in a quiet street, called Lady Mary instantly to the window; and then, giving way to feelings that refused restraint, she ran down-stairs at once to the door. It was not Kennedy, however, and though that was a disappointment, yet it was compensated by beholding the face of old Colonel Adair, a little paler than usual, it is true, but still not looking very ill after all.

"Your servants, my dear Lady Mary," he said, as soon as he saw her, "have brought me here against my will: but, indeed, I cannot think of making your house an hospital."

"But I will have it so, Colonel Adair!" replied Lady Mary; "pray let them move you in. We have plenty of room both for yourself and Mr. Green, who is, I am sorry to see, wounded also."

"A flea-bite mine, my lady, a mere flea-bite," replied

Adjutant Green ; " they say I shall have a stiff knee for the rest of my life ; but if I can get on horseback again, I don't care, and my sword-hand will soon be well. But as for the colonel, the doctors say the ball has shattered the small bone of his leg, and good luck that it did not touch the large one. However, I am very much obliged, my lady, but I, for my part, will go to the hospital. You'll have plenty to do here, ma'am ; there is poor Major Kennedy badly hurt, not half an hour's march behind, poor fellow ! and I am sure, my lady, if you would be kind enough, he needs help much more than I do. They are carrying him on a hand-litter, for he could not stand a carriage, and yet would come on. If some of these good fellows, now, would but go out and bring him here."

" I have sent already," said Lady Mary, more calmly than might have been expected ; " but we have plenty of room for you also, Mr. Green. The adjutant, however, kept his resolution ; and after Colonel Adair had been moved from the carriage to a room upon the ground floor, he himself ordered the men to take him to one of the hospitals, where every care and kindness was shown to him.

In the meantime, Colonel Adair, as soon as he was placed at ease in his bed, was visited both by Lady Pontypool and her niece. His first questions showed them that he was acquainted with all that had befallen Helen ; and that his anxiety and distress on her account were doing him more serious injury than even the wound which he had received upon the field. The tidings, however, contained in the postscript of Lacy's note afforded the best balm for that hurt ; and though Mary Denham did not tell the exact words in which Lacy had couched the information, yet Colonel Adair knew the friendly and somewhat enthusiastic character of the young officer too well, to doubt that he would use every possible means of restoring his daughter to him. " I am sure Captain Lacy is infinitely kind," he said ; " I never can be grateful enough for all that he has done for me and mine."

Lady Pontypool looked at her niece with a meaning smile, which instantly made Mary resolve to caution her, the very first opportunity, against betraying Lacy's secret ; but at the very moment a servant entered, and spoke something in a low voice.

" It is poor Major Kennedy," said Mary, rising, and trembling in every limb ; " I must go and see what can be done directly. A surgeon has been sent for, Colonel

Adair, and will be here directly. I will be back with you in a few moments."

"Do not hurry," replied the old soldier, who with his eyes hermetically sealed towards Lacy and his own daughter, had been somewhat more quicksighted than Lady Pontypool respecting Lady Mary Denham and Major Kennedy; at least, from what he had seen on his last visit at that house, he had been led to entertain some suspicions.

Lady Mary Denham then left him with her aunt, and hurried out into the hall; but as the wounded officer had been borne into Brussels by relays of men, upon a sort of temporary litter, they had carried him at once into the chamber which was destined for his reception, and were standing resting at the door of the room waiting their reward. Kennedy's wounds had been already dressed by the surgeons on the field, but still, when Mary Denham entered, it was a ghastly spectacle that met her eyes. There he lay almost fainting with exhaustion, his fine features sharpened and shrunk with suffering and loss of blood; his clear keen eye dim and hazy, and his brown cheek deprived of every particle of colour. Round his brows were bound many a fold of bandages, and as he lay supine without attempting in the least to turn, Mary could perceive that over his left arm and shoulder were many similar coverings. There was something in her step, however, though it was as light as that with which a mother treads the chamber of her sick child, which instantly made Kennedy raise his eyes, and as he did so there came up in them a gleam of their former light. For an instant, Kennedy seemed to find a difficulty in speaking, and he merely greeted Mary by a look of fond affection, and by raising his unwounded arm to take her hand in his, as she sat down beside his couch. Mary gazed down upon him, and the tears, thick and fast, fell upon his pillow, and some even upon his cheek.

"I had a presentiment that it would be thus, dear Mary!" he said, in a low and feeble tone; "I thought such happiness could not remain long unmingled. But, dear Mary, will not my being brought here make the ill-natured world talk?"

"Let it," replied Mary Denham; and then bending down her head beside him, while a brighter blush than had ever stained it in her happiest days crimsoned her beautiful cheek, she spoke a few words to him, in a tone which infallibly prevented their being heard by any one else.

A warm and glowing smile played round Kennedy's lip. "Oh, Mary, Mary!" he said, "you are indeed an angel. But it would be too selfish in me to suffer such a thing."

"Not selfish at all, Kennedy," replied Mary, "for it would be conferring the greatest happiness you can on me, by enabling me to attend you constantly without impropriety."

"But suppose I should die, Mary," he said, gazing in her face; "but I do not think I shall," he added; "for if there be a power on earth to keep a man alive after such wounds as mine, it will be found in such love as yours. Do what you will about it, dear Mary; but first speak to your aunt, by all means."

"I have! I will again," answered Mary Denham; "but, thank God, here come the surgeons, and I will leave you with them for the present."

Thus saying she left him, and returned to Colonel Adair. But it may be necessary to say what use my Aunt Pontypool had made of her absence. No sooner had Mary left the room than Lady Pontypool, as if divining that her niece would enjoin her to silence, and afraid of not having time to accomplish the feat she meditated, darted upon the subject of Charles Lacy again.

"He is, indeed,—I mean Charles," she said—"he is, indeed, a most excellent and admirable young man. Very seldom does one see such talents and such virtues united. She will be a happy woman, Colonel Adair, who has such a man for her husband."

"Happy, indeed!" said Colonel Adair, with a sigh, wishing for just such a husband for his own poor Helen. "Happy, indeed! Lady Pontypool. I one time thought, and even understood you to say, that Captain Lacy was engaged to Lady Mary Denham; but I have lately entertained doubts."

This, in some degree, opened Lady Pontypool's eyes, and showed her that Colonel Adair was as ignorant of the feelings of Charles Lacy as she herself had been, till a few days before, and she hesitated as to what she would do. The least accident in the world would have saved her at that moment—the entrance of a servant, a sound in the street—would have preserved her from explosion; but no servant came in—the street was quite silent. She looked at Colonel Adair—she thought of his wound, and his daughter's unpleasant situation—she fancied how melan-

choly he must be, and what a comfort it would be to him to know that the fondest hopes he could have formed for his daughter's happiness, were realised in the mutual attachment of Lacy and Helen; and so, smoothing her apron, she told him the whole story. Colonel Adair looked certainly astonished, and there might be a mingling of pleasure in his feelings, but Lady Pontypool did not by any means succeed in producing that purely agreeable impression which she had anticipated.

"It is very strange that I have not heard this before," was his reply; "Helen is not accustomed to have any concealments from me."

"Oh, but, my dear cousin," rejoined Lady Pontypool, "you forget you have seen so little of Helen since we came to Brussels, that she may not have had an opportunity. You were always away at Nivelles, or some of those places, and when you did come to dinner you generally went away as soon as the dessert was upon the table."

"True, true!" replied Colonel Adair, "she has had no opportunity, poor girl; but I hope that Lord Methwyn has been informed. Lacy must have had occasion to write to his father, and I trust would not take such a step without his approbation and consent."

"Oh, I dare say he has informed him," said Lady Pontypool; "and, besides, there is no fear of his consent being withheld. He is the best-tempered man in the world, and so proud and fond of his son that he will do anything for him. Oh, I will undertake to manage Lord Methwyn, if there should be any difficulty."

Colonel Adair had almost hinted, in polite terms, that he would rather not have any management in the matter, but he thought of Helen's happiness, and crushed down the risings up of pride. He resolved, however, to speak no more on the subject to any one till he could see either Lacy or Lord Methwyn himself, in order that there might not be the slightest cause to say that he had given countenance to the engagement of his daughter and Lacy, in case of any opposition; and as he was thus wisely resolving, Lady Mary returned, little knowing what had been accomplished in her absence. She sat a few minutes with Colonel Adair, during which time the surgeons who had been with Major Kennedy examined his wounds. They then came to the apartment of Colonel Adair, but their answers in regard to their other patient were of that cau-

tious and guarded description, which left the heart of Mary Denham as much bruised as they found it. He was wounded very severely, they said, and in many places. Several sabre wounds, however, they went on to observe, were not otherwise dangerous than as they had greatly weakened him; but there were also several shot wounds, the result of which could not be yet ascertained: they hoped, however, that they were not likely to prove fatal. Such was the cold consolation which Mary Denham received from the medical men, who, after having made this report, proceeded to examine the wound of Colonel Adair, of which they spoke much more favourably, promising him speedy convalescence, and removing all fear of the necessity of amputation.

Lady Mary and Lady Pontypool had left the room during their actual attendance on Colonel Adair; and strange as it may seem, their report, unpropitious as it was in regard to Major Kennedy, confirmed in the strongest manner a resolution which Mary had previously taken, namely, if she found it possible, to give her hand at once to the wounded man. She accordingly sent for the chaplain of the embassy, and not choosing to trust to Lady Pontypool, explained to him calmly the exact circumstances in which she stood towards Major Kennedy, and expressed her wishes without either circumlocution or embarrassment. There was something so touching in her devotion,—ay, and even in the calm simplicity with which she detailed her feelings and her purposes,—that the good clergyman was moved. There might be some little difficulties made, he said, by other parties, as it was in general considered necessary that marriages in foreign countries should take place in the chapel of the embassy, or the house of the highest British authority there resident; but he had no doubt, he said, these could be removed, and that the representative of the King of England, for the time being, at Brussels, would consent to be present at the ceremony, in order to give it the necessary formalities. With the view of making the arrangements required, he then took his leave, and by his kind exertions all obstacles were removed. The happiness which the very thought gave evidently to the wounded man, was full repayment and support to Mary Denham under the execution of her purpose; and early the next morning, in the presence of the British Envoy, the ceremony of marriage was performed between her and Kennedy.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHEN Henry Adair re-entered the chamber of Ensign Williamson, he found the surgeon and two assistants still with him. They had just concluded a severe operation, to which they had had recourse for the purpose of raising the part of the sternum which had been driven in by the kick of the horse, and under the course of which the patient had twice fainted. He now, however, felt greatly relieved, could speak aloud, and seemed to feel confident of recovery. There was a certain something, nevertheless, in his countenance which made Henry Adair feel no slight doubt upon that point; and the old surgeon, Monsieur de Cl——x, on being asked in private his sincere opinion, replied at once, that there was little, if any, probability of saving the sufferer's life. "I will not say that such a thing is impossible," he replied; "for in surgery we every day see miracles; but I never saw so bad a case recover. However, there is no immediate danger,—that is to say, none within a few hours; and when I visit him again at night, I shall be able to tell whether he will certainly die or may still entertain a hope."

Now Henry Adair's purpose and desire, on the present occasion, was certainly not to distress the wounded man by questions which might irritate and retard his recovery; yet, undoubtedly, if death were inevitable, to endeavour to lead him, by every persuasion, to repair as far as he could, all that he had done amiss. He therefore determined to wait till after the surgeon's evening visit before he propounded the questions which he had resolved to put; and in the meantime he remained beside him, together with one of the old gentleman's assistants, paying him every sort of kindly attention, and soothing him as much as possible.

One of the surgeon's strictest injunctions had been to refrain from speaking as far as possible; but this rule the wounded man seemed very much inclined to break, notwithstanding the great pain that he suffered when he did so. He twice or three times asked Henry Adair whether he had seen Lacy, and if he had had any conversation with

him ; and on finding that they had walked to Paris together, a sort of feverish uneasiness seemed to take possession of him. Several times he hinted that there was something he should very much wish to say, yet still he broke off, adding, " But I shall recover, I am sure I shall, and then I can set all that to rights."

Once or twice, too, he asked, " You do not think I shall die, Adair, do you ?"

" In regard to the degree of your danger," replied Henry Adair, " the surgeon would not give any decided opinion this morning."

As the day went on, Henry Adair only left him for a few minutes at a time ; but whenever he did so and returned, he observed a marked change in the sufferer. The pale cheeks became flushed and fiery, his eyes acquired an unnatural brightness, his lips were parched and dry, and there was a continual thirst upon him which no liquid could satisfy. He was restless and uneasy, too, to an excessive degree, and no persuasions could prevent him from tossing about in his bed, though he hereby only inflicted fresh agony on himself. At length the old surgeon again appeared, looked at the patient, felt his pulse, asked a few questions, and then called Henry Adair into the next room. " It is necessary, sir," he said, " to inform you that your friend will die ; and, as every man has something to settle before he leaves this world, he had better be informed of the fact. Do you think he is afraid to die ?"

" Sir, he is an officer in the British army !" replied Henry Adair.

" That may be, sir," replied the surgeon ; " and he may be the bravest man in the field in the world, and yet not like the aspect of Death when he comes quietly to one's bedside. I have seen it a hundred times—ay, a thousand."

" At all events," replied Mr. Adair, " it is absolutely necessary that he should be informed of his state. If you think there is no chance of recovery left, which may be taken away by a knowledge of his danger, you had better tell him at once."

" My sincere opinion is, that he has no chance left," replied the surgeon. " I mean to say, I think he will be dead in four-and-twenty hours ; and why I think that it would be better to tell him at once is, that probably delirium will come on in the night, which may never leave him till his death."

"Then by all means tell him his state at once," answered Henry Adair; "if he be willing to use the time rightly, there is many an important thing to be done."

Thus saying, he led the way back to the chamber of the dying man, whose eyes turned anxiously to the faces of his friend and the surgeon as they approached. The old man then sat down by his bedside, and said, "I think it a duty, Monsieur, to advise you, if you have any affairs of importance remaining unsettled, to give them your immediate attention; for though the result of such accidents as that which you have met with is ever uncertain, yet it is not right to conceal from you that you are in immediate danger."

The young soldier was silent for several minutes, but his lip quivered convulsively, and his hand might be seen grasping the bed-clothes in the agony of despair. "Then I am dying," he said at length, "can't I recover? Ask him, Adair, if nothing can be done—is there no way? Is there no chance? Ask him, ask him, for curse me if I can take the trouble of talking French to him now."

"I am sorry to say, Williamson," replied Henry Adair, "that he has already told me, there is no chance; and he thought it necessary that you should be told this at once, that you might not delay the settlement of your affairs and the preparation of your mind too long."

"Good God! then he thinks that it will be very soon!" cried the wounded man; "not to-night! surely not to-night! Ask him, Adair, ask him! Dites-moi, Monsieur!"—and he was going on to inquire himself, when Henry Adair interrupted him by saying, "No, he does not say so soon as that; but he is afraid that fever may bring on delirium, and then you would not be able to make any legal arrangements."

"O, but I have nothing to settle!" cried the other impatiently. "I'd rather you had not told me, and let me die in peace."

"But would you not wish your father to be sent for, if he be anywhere near?" demanded Adair. But the face of the other became flushed with anger in a moment, and he cried, "My father! d—n him, no!"

Henry Adair started back in horror, and the other went on, "Why, if it had not been for him, I should never have got into this cursed scrape. I owe him nothing but evil—he has managed to ruin me and get me killed here, and, for aught I know, may have sent me to hell here—

after. I'll not see him, I would not see him if he were here—but he is far enough off. He's in London by this time."

Henry Adair was silent; for to a mind like his there was something so fearful in hearing a child pile curses on his father's head, that for the moment he could not find words to answer; and when thought came to his aid he judged that it would be better not.

After a time, the surgeon took his leave and withdrew, promising to come again towards midnight; and the assistant whom he left behind having been installed in the adjoining room, Henry Adair sat down to endeavour, in the first place, to soothe the mind of the dying man; in the next, to give his feelings a more just and noble direction; and in the last place, to induce him to tell all that he knew concerning Helen Adair, and to make reparation, as far as he could, for the pain and anxiety he had caused. He knew not, however, the difficulty of the task he had undertaken. Williamson himself, too, was irritated, not softened, by the near approach of death. Corporeal pain and the irritation of fever tended to render him, whose temper was naturally headstrong and violent, ten thousand times more impatient and vehement. All the efforts, therefore, of Henry Adair to soothe him proved in vain, and every attempt he made to lead his mind to higher views was instantly counteracted by either angry irritability, vain self-conceit, or the long-nourished and deeply-implanted errors of which his father's house had been the nursery.

When, at length, Adair began to speak of Helen and Lacy, all the poor remains of young Williamson's stock of patience seemed to desert him. He cursed, he swore, he blasphemed; and, rising indignantly from his bedside, Henry Adair prepared to leave him to his fate, when the wandering and incoherent words in which he vented his passion showed that the delirium which the surgeon had prognosticated was already coming upon him. The kindness of Henry's heart then got the better of his indignation, and he determined to remain with him through the night.

A fearful night indeed it was. The unhappy man was afraid of death, and was afraid of hell, and conscious of evil without feeling contrition; he raved upon these two subjects through six or seven weary hours, apparently never dreaming of repentance, and only hating and struggling against the Almighty hand that chastised him.

Thus raved he on, and in this state was he when at eleven o'clock the old surgeon again visited him. Finding him in such a situation, with all hope of saving him passed, Monsieur de Cl——x ordered some tranquillizing medicine, with a view of allaying both the actual pain and the great irritation he suffered; but the effect seemed different from that he had expected to produce, and, during the next three hours, after he left the dying man, Williamson seemed more wildly delirious than ever. Towards morning, however, he became a little calmer, and then fell into a heavy sleep, during which he often muttered and tossed about, but it remained unbroken, and Henry Adair, wearied out with all the exertion he had lately undertaken, called the surgeon's assistant, and proceeding to the next room cast himself into an arm-chair and fell into a light sleep. He had not thus slept two hours, however, when the surgeon's assistant woke him to inform him that Mr. Williamson was awake, and asked for him.

"Is he better?" demanded Henry Adair. The other raised his shoulders till they grazed his ears, replying that he was free from delirium, but that his strength was failing. When Henry Adair entered the chamber of the sick man, however, he saw that the change was marked indeed. He was lying quite still, his face was an ashy gray, his lips pale, his features sharpened, and as he slowly turned his eye at the sound of approaching steps, the very movement showed how completely the whole being was subdued within him. "Adair!" he said, in a hollow voice, as the other sat down by his bedside once more. "Adair! it is coming very fast! I am dying now, I feel! and I am afraid I have been very mad and very foolish all last night. I have a faint remembrance of saying and doing a thousand very wrong and very silly things. Forgive me, Adair, if I have offended you! You have been kind to me all through my life, and are kind to me to the last."

"I have nothing to forgive indeed!" replied Henry Adair. "I was not offended, my poor fellow. I was only sorry to see that you would not make atonement while it was in your power, as the only means of smoothing the way before you. Remember, Williamson, we are all taught that it is never too late, and the memory of having done one good act before you die will, depend upon it, be your greatest comfort at the point of death."

"I know it will," replied Williamson, "and it was on that account I sent for you—but I do not know, Adair, how you will like it yourself."

"Like what?" demanded Henry Adair, in no slight surprise; "I shall like anything that will make you more comfortable. Like what?"

"Why, what I have got to tell," replied young Williamson; "but mind, it is your own fault, for you say—at least you said so last night—that it is my duty to tell all that can conduce to make others more happy, and to do justice to those who have been injured."

"I say so still!" cried Henry Adair; "and if by doing so you were to deprive me of everything on earth, I should say you only did right to tell it."

"Very well, very well," replied the other, "I will tell the whole—lean down your head that I may not tire myself with speaking, for I am desperate weak this morning, and my breath comes short, and my breast is very bad, though not so bad as yesterday. However, do you remember one day going to the church at —, when you came suddenly down to visit us in the country, and coming home raving about a lady you had seen there—well, that was Helen Adair, whom you were talking of just now."

"I know that," replied Henry Adair, with his cheek somewhat heated, "I have seen her since."

"Well, I would not tell you who it was, because I was in love with Helen Adair myself; and, after you were out of the room, my father told me I had done quite right, and desired me to do everything on earth to keep you from making acquaintance with her, which he and I contrived to do. I thought it very strange that he should wish me to marry a girl without much money, but I was very glad of it, and one day I saw him, when we got to the house in Hill Street, put away one single paper into a large iron chest, built into the wall of a little room behind the dining-room. Well, ever since then he has been working away to bring about my marriage with Helen Adair, and I gave him the best help I could; but we were unlucky in our schemes, till at length, just lately, at Brussels he proposed to me to carry her off and take her to Germany by the way of Namur. He said that she would be certain then to marry me, without further ado, because she would know that if she did not her character would be ruined. When he explained it all to me, however, I told him I would have nothing to do with it, and could

have nothing to do with it, for I could neither get leave of absence nor quit the army without leave, and, in short, that the whole business might get me shot. He then swore, and vowed that I should do it, and when he found me as obstinate as he was, he said that I would be the ruin of him and my whole family. I told him, that if he would explain how that could be I would do my best, but I would do nothing at all unless the whole was told me, how my marrying Helen Adair would save them and all. He then showed me that Lord Methwyn, whose agent he was, had dismissed him, and that all he had to depend upon was what he got from your father as his agent. 'He gives me double commission,' my father said, speaking of yours, and then he told me why. It seems that your great grandfather made two wills, the first leaving all he had to your father; the second, leaving half to the old colonel; but your father and mine between them concealed the last will, and got the witnesses to it out of the way, and that very will was the paper I saw my father hiding away. 'Now,' said my father, 'I have always had Lord Adair under my thumb by the having that will in my possession; but that blundering old fool, Lady Pontypool, has stumbled upon part of the truth from one of the witnesses, whom we got into the army, and sent everywhere he was likely to get killed in, but without success; and she has gone to Lord Adair and proposed to him to patch up the matter by marrying his son Henry to Helen Adair. The old lord, in a great fright, has consented, and if you do not get hold of Helen Adair before the old colonel hears of the business, and the marriage is formally settled, we are all ruined, and I may get a touch of Botany Bay for my pains.'—I saw how the whole matter was in a minute; my father told me that if I could but get away for two days, so as to make Helen know that her reputation was lost if she did not marry me, she, or any other woman, would do it at once; and I agreed to try it upon two conditions, first, that he would give me up the key of that strong box, as I did not choose to be his slave all my life, as he had made your father. I chose to have the whip in my own hands, and next I made it a bargain that he should get Helen's maid to go with her, because I did not choose to be thought quite a blackguard if ever the story was told. The last, he said, would be easily managed, and would be all the better, because, if the maid went with her mistress, nobody afterwards would believe

that Helen had not gone with her own good will; but about the first he made a terrible piece of work, and called me a great many hard names, saying, that I was an ungrateful viper, and that all he was doing was to serve me; but I knew better, Henry, and I held out. When he found that would not do he tried to palm off a wrong key upon me, but I knew the key as well as he did himself, and so I told him I was not to be taken in; and then he laughed and said I should have been a lawyer. But I am growing faint, and so I must make haste. After I got the key all the rest was easily managed. We marched for Nivelles on the morning of the 15th, but I contrived to get back at night. My father managed everything; he bribed one of Lady Mary's foreign servants, and one of the waiters at the great ball, so that we knew everything the minute it happened. All our plan, too, was laid out for the journey; and I was only to show myself to Helen from time to time, and to play my part with her. Then my father was to go on to Namur, and joining her there, carry her across by Aix la Chapelle to Cologne, and do what he could to bully or persuade her, giving himself out for her own father by the way, and I was to join them as soon as I could. But you know the sudden advance of the French, and the defeat of Blucher, threw all our plans into confusion. I was obliged to gallop back to Nivelles, instead of going after Helen. She fell into the hands of the French at Quatre-Bras——"

"And where is she now?" demanded Henry Adair, eagerly.

"Either at Calais or in England!" replied the other, in a voice that was evidently decreasing in strength every minute; "I was taken prisoner, you know, at Quatre-Bras, and finding that Helen was there, I did not know what to do about her. So I told them that she was my wife, and begged that she might be sent to Calais, there to meet my father. At the same time I contrived to bribe a fellow to take a letter for me to my father in Brussels, and there I left the matter, and know no more about it."

He paused, and Henry Adair also was silent, for one part of the tale which he had just heard was full of such terrible interest to himself, that it deprived him of all power of reply. In everything that concerned Helen Adair he felt all that a warm, eager enthusiast could feel—indignant at the treatment she had undergone, grieved for the distress and anguish of mind that she must have suf-

fered, and experiencing all that yearning of the heart to fly to her relief, which none but a fine and ardent soul like his could feel; but such sensations were crossed and interrupted in their course by the deep, burning, glowing anguish of shame for a parent's conduct—a parent whom he loved, and had striven through life to honour in despite of one degrading weakness. Now, however,—now, what could be his feelings towards that parent, when he found that long ago he had cast away from him the only true source of honour—pure integrity; that for a sum of pitiful gold—of dross which, as Henry thought of it, grew hateful in his eyes—he, his father, had plundered another, taken what was not his own, submitted through life to truckle and bow to the will of a villain; and had acted as, and felt himself to be inferior to, the low swindler, that fleeces the fools of a gaming-house.

It was more than his heart or his brain could bear; and during the whole of young Williamson's story, and for many minutes afterwards, he remained totally silent, with the exception of the one brief exclamation regarding Helen, which we have mentioned. His head hung down upon his chest, his bright dark eye was fixed sightless upon one spot of the floor, and his hand played, all unconscious, with the tassels of the dying man's bed, while agonies more terrible than the other had soul to suffer, raged within his bosom.

"Well!" said the faint voice of young Williamson at length,—“Well, Adair, now I have told you all, what do you say to it?”

"Say to it!" replied Henry Adair,—“say to it!—that I will make him refund every sixpence, or die.”

"You will not do that without exposing him," said the other.

"I care not," answered Henry,—“I care not whom I expose, or what I do. If I suffer such a disgrace to continue one hour after I know it, I make myself a partner in the villany; and I will not live disgraced! But let us think of you, Williamson; is it not a comfort to you thus to have unburdened your breast? Do you not feel happier, lighter, better, for the load you have cast off you?—for having done what you can to atone, by telling this tale, for all the evil share you had in the deeds which it relates?”

"Perhaps I do," replied the dying man,—“perhaps I do!—yet I should like to live a little longer still.”

"But if that be not possible, you will die more happy," said Henry Adair; "you have made the first great act of atonement, and the darkest cloud is swept away from the awful future."

"I do think that I do feel easier at heart," said the dying man with a faint smile; "and I am sure if you do not care about the matter being known, I should not care about it either. As to that, indeed, I am very willing to do all that I can to get the old colonel back his own again; indeed, I wish it very much, poor man! and I am sure I am very sorry to think that I took any part whatever in vexing him, or poor Helen Adair; I wish to God I had held out firm, and refused to have anything to do with it."

"That is right!" said Henry Adair; "you are in the right way now, Williamson. Fear not, my poor fellow. We might well feel sure that a God of mercy, who has surrounded his creatures with so many undeserved blessings, even in this world, would not be inexorable to them in another, when they have done all they can to remedy and atone for that which they have done amiss—we might well believe it, even if our religion did not give us the full assurance thereof. So be comforted, Williamson!"

"I am comforted already, Adair," replied the other; "but I will do more; if you will open my writing-desk there, you will find the key I mentioned, and a paper folded up. The paper I made my father give me with the key, saying that he gave and made over to me that box in the room behind the dining-room, with all that it contained; and I now give it to you, Adair—stay, if you and the French fellow can lift me up, I will write upon it."

What he desired was done, and he scrawled a few words upon the paper, assigning his right therein to Henry Adair; but the writing was so tremulous and unlike his ordinary hand, that he looked at it with a sad and fearful glance, as a new evidence of the change that was falling upon him. He had wisdom enough, however, to make the surgeon's assistant testify that it was his writing; and then giving it with the key to Henry Adair, he said, "If you take that, and make haste, you may get to London before my father comes back from Calais, and then you can take the will at once. I am sure I wish to do what is right—now at least; and if you can spare my father in the matter, I hope you will."

"That I certainly will," replied Henry Adair; "but I will not leave you, Williamson. You seem to me to be

better; and we shall hear what old Monsieur de Cl——x says when he comes."

"He will only say I am dying," said Williamson; "you cannot tell what I feel here in my chest. The pain has nearly left me; but it seems as if there were a mass of ice lying there, and as if all my lungs and heart were gone. However, I do not mind it so much now, somehow: I am not so much afraid;—and do you know if any of our chaplains could be got for me, I should like to have a talk with one of them for an hour or so before I die."

"That shall be done immediately," replied Henry Adair; "I will go for one myself, as soon as ever Monsieur de Cl——x has seen you. I think I hear his voice on the stairs now."

Nor was he mistaken. The old surgeon appeared the moment after, and went through all the ordinary ceremonies which are bestowed by medical men upon the bed of death. He did not, however, augur at all more favourably of the event of his patient's case from the comparative tranquillity into which he had fallen, nor from the cessation of pain. On the contrary, he informed Henry Adair, when questioned apart, that the progress of the whole had been much more rapid than he could have imagined, and that, notwithstanding some cordials which he ordered, he did not think his patient would see the end of the day.

He left Adair to do as he pleased, in regard to giving the dying man exact information respecting the very near approach of death, and, promising to return again in a few hours, took his leave. Henry Adair then proceeded at once to seek for the religious aid which Williamson required, and having found one of the chaplains who had followed the British army to Paris, he easily induced him to go immediately to the bed-side of the dying man, in order to afford him what consolation and advice he could. In the meanwhile he himself proceeded to his own hotel, and dispatched a few lines to Lacy, telling him that he had obtained important information, which he much wished to communicate.

On his return to the dwelling of Ensign Williamson, he found the clergyman still with him, and remained in the saloon adjoining, till it was time for the sufferer to take a second of the cordials which the surgeon had ordered. On entering he found the dying man very tranquil, though his cheek was moistened with tears. He said nothing as

Henry gave him his draught, but looked in his face with an expression of gratitude, and pressed his hand.

"I rather think," said the clergyman, in a low tone, "that his voice is gone, for he has been listening to me attentively; but for some time has not uttered a word."

Williamson seemed to divine what was said, though being spoken in a whisper he could not have heard it. He made an attempt to speak, but it was vain, and from that moment, appearing to resign himself to his fate, he did not renew the attempt, but remained calmly awaiting the end. Towards three o'clock, he fell into a tranquil sleep, but in about an hour after awoke with a sharp start, gazed round him with an expression of fear, and then drew one long heavy sigh. An agonish sort of shudder passed over him, and the next moment the eyes became fixed, losing all expression in the glossy vacuity of death.

The chaplain had remained beside him till the last moment, and Henry Adair, explaining that business which admitted no delay, called him instantly to England, requested the worthy clergyman, and received his promise, to see the last rites performed towards the body of the unfortunate young man. He had just concluded his directions in these respects, when a message was brought to inform him that Captain Lacy awaited him below, and placing a sufficient sum in the hands of the clergyman, to meet all probable expenses, he hurried down to inform his friend of what had occurred, and to take measures for rendering the information he had obtained profitable to the ends of justice.

CHAPTER XXXI.

HENRY ADAIR found his friend at the door of the hotel on horseback ; but as soon as Lacy perceived that Adair had his hat and stick in his hand, ready to return to his hotel, he dismounted, and taking his arm, walked on with him, followed by a servant with his horse.

"I came to ask you whether you have gained any further information concerning Helen," Lacy said, "and to tell you that I am ordered home to-morrow with despatches, as I hoped. Indeed, if they be ready before it is very late, I shall set out to-night, in order to have some hours free at Calais."

"Of Helen I have heard nothing but what you knew before," replied Henry Adair ; "she is most likely at Calais, for Williamson, it seems, wrote to his father to meet her there ; but if you are going to England, give me but time to write a letter to my father, and I will go with you. Williamson is dead !"

"Indeed !" cried Lacy ; "so soon : that is terrible ! I am afraid that he was not very well prepared to meet our great enemy—death ; and had I shot him yesterday morning, that very circumstance would have lain heavy at my heart."

"Well it might," replied Henry Adair ; "but he died in a better condition than I expected. However, as I said, let me but write to my father, and I will go with you."

"Indeed, Adair," replied Lacy, gazing upon his haggard and anxious features ; "I think you had better not. Deeply obliged to you as I am for all the interest you have taken in this painful business regarding Miss Adair, still considering all circumstances, I cannot hope or expect that you should exert yourself any further in the pursuit. Old Williamson, who has persecuted her for his son, will have no object in detaining her now that his son is dead, and will, depend upon it, endeavour to shield himself by restoring her to her friends directly ; so that my search will doubtless be greatly lightened. You had better stay and take some repose, for you must be fatigued, and you look ill."

"I wish you could say that I look dying," replied Henry Adair; "but in regard to Williamson, you mistake all. I have heard the whole from the unhappy young man, whose eyes are just closed, and I possess the power of doing right to those who have been wronged; but for that purpose I must hasten to London with all speed, and as we go I will tell you all that I have learned, for I may need help and direction. I willingly trust to your honour to keep secret that which affects me in the business; but I must go to London directly, if the journey were to kill me—indeed, I wish it would."

"Nay, nay, Adair!" said Lacy, in a tone of remonstrance; "I thought that your mind was of too firm and decided a character to give way thus, under any disappointment."

"He jests at scars who never felt a wound," replied Adair, shaking his head sadly; but then the next moment, he added, suddenly—"But we mistake each other! You are thinking of Helen, and perhaps fancy that I seek to go with you in the fond folly of wishing to gaze again upon the jewel I cannot obtain. Charles Lacy, the wound in my bosom is deeper than even that. I have been disappointed therein, deeply, bitterly, it is true—but it is disappointment that is over—done—gone for ever. It is a bubble broken on the stream of life—a dream vanished—a star, ay, and one of the brightest, fallen from the heavens of youth. She has fixed her fate upon the love of a man that is worthy of her, and though the old wound may now and then give me a pang, yet on that score my mind is made up; and though I may not have the first great hope of making her happy myself, I might have the second, which is little inferior, to know that her happiness is secure; but that and every other source of joy is dried up in my bosom, Lacy, by news that I have heard since. I have not time to tell you all now; but I will tell you as we go. Only give me half an hour's notice and I will be ready to set out."

They were now at the door of Adair's hotel, and merely wringing Lacy's hand, he left him, and went in. His servant almost instantly presented himself, with the waiter of the inn, to ask what he would have for dinner; but Adair replied briefly, "Nothing!" and motioned them to leave him.

It was now, perhaps, for the first time, that he fully felt all that was dreadful and agonizing in his situation; no

other feelings, no other ideas interposed ; and he could sit down and bend all his thoughts to the one terrible conviction, that his father had connived at one of the basest acts of villany that could be committed, and might at any time be branded with public infamy, on account of the deed he had done. Some sons, perhaps, might have felt glad that the task and the power of working redress had fallen to their hands, instead of, to strangers, and might, even with the best intentions, have calculated and considered the means of sheltering their own parent, in the first place, while they resolved upon doing justice to others afterwards ; they might have laid their plan to bargain for secrecy, and to buy off dishonour with money. But the mind of Henry Adair was one which admitted no compromise, which could follow no tortuous path, which could adopt no temporising policy. All he could have wished, all he could have desired was, that the task had fallen to some other hands than his—to some one who would not have thought themselves degraded by bargaining to save his father's honour, and his name from disgrace, or that he himself had died before the discovery. As it was, however, he felt that to say a word before he did the act of justice to those who had been wronged, to ask the least engagement to secrecy ere he restored their rights, would, in some sort, implicate himself in the transaction, and render himself a sharer in the deed that he despised. No ; his determination was fixed at once, to obtain the will from him who had so unjustly withheld it, to seek out Colonel Adair, and to place it in his hands without conditions. "I may, then," he thought, "represent to him my feelings and my anxiety to shield the last hours of my father's life from the world's contempt ; and while I promise full restitution to the very last farthing, cast myself upon his generosity to save us from the pointed finger and the hissing tongue of scorn."

He sat long in painful, dreary thought, till at length a carriage, rolling up to the door, roused him. Then came steps upon the staircase, approaching his apartments, and in a moment after, Lacy was announced, and entered, prepared for travelling. All was now hurry and confusion. The letter Adair had proposed to write was not written, none of his preparations had been made, and yet he was resolved to go. With the aid of Lacy, and his servant, some clothes, and other things, were packed up, his proper passes were procured ; and while his friend discharged the

bill of the aubergiste, and gave directions to his servant to pack up the rest of his master's effects, and follow by the diligence, he himself wrote a few lines to Lord Adair, giving him the tidings of what had occurred, and breathing a part—though only a part—of the bitterness of his heart. He said:—

“MY FATHER,

“By the confession of Ensign John Williamson, made to me on his bed of death, I learn that the will of your grandfather, conveying one moiety of his property to Colonel Adair, has been concealed by your lawyer, with your knowledge and consent. The young man, in remorse at some transactions in which he has been implicated, not only informed me of these facts, but put me in possession of the means of giving the will to the right person. You may conceive my feelings under these circumstances, but my conduct is determined: I set out to-night for London to obtain the paper, and to give it at once to Colonel Adair. I must leave him to act as he thinks fit, but I will entreat him to spare us as much as possible; and doubt not, that on full restitution being made, he will, for the honour of his family name, suffer silence to draw a veil over the occurrence I deplore. You had better furnish me instantly with full powers to offer such restitution, and address your letter to the care of Lord Methwyn, with whose son I travel to England.”

Such were the only words which the manifold contending feelings in his breast suffered him to write; and having given strict charge to his servant to put the letter in the post the next morning, he followed Lacy into the carriage which that officer had bought for the occasion, and was soon rolling away towards London.

At first he cast himself back in the vehicle, pausing and hesitating as to how much he should tell his companion. The mind of the unhappy young man was never made for the concealment of anything. Too eager, too impetuous in all his feelings, to pause in long consideration of every step he took, and at the same time too noble and too pure in all his emotions, to fear the eye of any mortal resting upon the heart which was open to God, he had never accustomed himself to cast the slightest veil over his own actions. In the first place his friend already knew a part, in the next place he was in some degree concerned. Then

Henry Adair felt that, unaccustomed to deal with knaves and villains, he might, where Williamson was concerned, require that clear good sense and knowledge of the world, that calm decision and commanding firmness, which he could find nowhere so fully combined as in Charles Lacy. Then again he remembered that he had promised to tell his companion the whole, and that he was one of those men who can be placed in no circumstances wherein they will not keep their word, even to their own detriment.

He felt a difficulty, however, in beginning his tale; and, therefore, after he had again made up his mind to the complete disclosure, he remained silent for some time, revolving all the circumstances in his mind, and hesitating how to begin.

At length, working himself up, by constantly revolving all the facts in his mind, till he forgot totally that Lacy and himself had not been conversing over the matter all along, Henry Adair burst forth: "But suppose, Lacy, he should be in town and refuse to let us take the will.—Oh, but I forgot, you do not know what I am speaking of, and I promised to tell you. Listen, then, and I will. But first, Lacy, promise me in the matter which I am going to consult you upon, you will act with me in everything, and will not reveal any part of what I have discovered, without my consent—but I know you will—so there is no need to bind you by promises. What I have to say, Lacy, is very terrible to me—terrible to me even to think of, much more to speak about, but it must be done; and I must not only speak about it, but act upon it; and it is on that account I wish to ask you how I may act to the best advantage."

"Any advice or assistance I can give you, Adair," replied Lacy, "you may command, and be perfectly sure that anything you tell me in confidence shall be buried in my bosom, till such time as you require it to be revealed."

"Well, I will tell you all," answered Henry Adair. "It has almost driven me mad in turning it in my mind alone, and perhaps when it is spoken I shall feel some relief. You remember what I told you yesterday morning regarding my finding good old Colonel Adair and honest Charles Green on the field of Waterloo, and the story that Green told us about the will. Well, that unhappy fellow Williamson, on his death-bed, has given me a clear insight into the whole."—And Adair then proceeded to relate everything which had occurred after that change of feeling had taken place which had succeeded in young Williamson

to the delirium of the preceding night. He also informed Charles Lacy of his determination in regard to the will ; and added, " You may easily conceive, Lacy, how terrible a stroke this has been upon me ; how dreadful is the consciousness that my father could commit such an act ; how painful is every step which I must take in exposing such a transaction ; and yet, Lacy, it must be done, for no consideration upon earth shall induce me to pause one moment till that is fully executed."

" In that you are quite right, Adair," replied Lacy, willing to do all he could to relieve his mind ; " but it seems to me that you are distressing yourself unnecessarily, or, at all events, prematurely, in regard to your father. Here, all that you positively know is, that the will has been concealed by that scoundrel Williamson, and that it is still in his possession. There is no proof but the assertion of the villain himself to his little less rascally son, that your father was at all acquainted with the fact. Adjutant Green told you, I think, that he was not in the room when the last will was made, and amongst all the many probabilities which would tend greatly to modify your view of the case, is the chance of Williamson having in the first instance concealed the fact that a new will was made, even from your father, till he had taken possession of the property and so entangled himself with the whole business that it was difficult to recede. Such, and a thousand other suppositions might be brought forward, which would alter all the particulars, and yet the general fact be true. But at all events you have no right to assume that your father was any participator in the business, and still less to admit that such was the case to others, till you have some better proof than the bare word of a rascal, who is not to be believed upon his oath. Satisfy yourself with doing substantial justice ; recover the paper, put it in the hands of Colonel Adair, and leave him or others to investigate, if they think fit, how it was so long concealed ; but I do not think that he will judge it expedient to do so."

" Thank you, thank you, Lacy," cried Adair, turning round in the carriage, and grasping his hand with deep gratitude for the relief, that even a doubt of his father's culpability afforded him. " But let us now consider what are the first measures to be taken in regard to this Williamson."

The consideration was difficult, and the consultation long ; and when it was over a break took place in their

conversation. From weariness and exhaustion, Henry Adair fell asleep, and Lacy, of a stronger frame and more habituated to endure fatigue, leaned back and thought with joy of the extraordinary result of the scenes which we have lately described. He looked forward into the future, through the magic perspective glass of hope, and saw the last obstacle between himself and Helen Adair removed by the accidental discovery which had just taken place ; and as the morning dawned with unusual brightness and splendour, he felt as if it were the herald of many happy days, the harbinger of joys to come. Oh, deceitful hopes ! oh, vain anticipations ! how idle is it in man to calculate the result of any one event which takes place throughout the whole of his stumbling, blindfold course !

CHAPTER XXXII.

ABOUT half-past twelve o'clock at night, in the end of July, at one of those periods when no moon lights the noon of night, and when the streets of London,—all gasless and woe-begone, as they appeared in those days,—were as dark as the pit of Acheron, two men walked slowly up the right side of Hill Street, Berkeley Square. We love two, and as far as possible deal in pairs, for odd numbers were only made for the affections of odd people and old maids ; but still it must be acknowledged that these two men were coasted along upon the other side of the way by a third person, who, by the manner in which he eyed them, and hung upon their steps, seemed to have too close and sympathetic connexion with them not to form one of the company, and thus spoil the harmony of the numbers. They approached the door of what appeared to be a large, newly fitted up empty house, a great deal more smart in its externals than the venerable smoke-coated mansions on either side of it ; and looked first down to the bottom of the area, then up to the parapet of the roof. Not a light of any kind was visible, and in the window of the next house might be seen a large printed bill, informing the public that it was to be let under the paternal auspices of a Gillow or a Robins.

Having made this perquisition, the two gentlemen walked on to the corner of the next street, and looked both up and down, but no one was apparent, except their friend on the other side of the way. In those days no comet-like police moved in their eccentric orbits through the streets of London, protecting the side-pockets of his majesty's lieges, and wrangling with old basket women who obstruct the king's highway; and close beside them, snug in oaken box, reclined the peaceful watchman, who charmed the ear of night with the soft music of his sleeping nose. Having ascertained these facts, the two, the Orestes and Pylades of the night, returned to the house they had examined, and shook the area door. There was a renitency, however, about it, a spirit of resistance, which seemed disposed to make their efforts take the more ambitious way of mounting to their purpose, like many greater men, on the long rows of spear heads which surmounted the iron railings. This, however, they avoided, the one who had shaken the door dipping his hand into his pocket and bringing forth a crooked iron instrument, which, with soft persuasion, shook the resolution of the lock, and the area-door swinging back, gave them easy means of descent. They soon disappeared from upper air, and while they held a secret conference at the door of the house, which opened into the area, the worthy, who had hitherto perambulated the other side of the way, crossed over, and passed up and down with a degree of rapidity which implied some apprehension and agitation affecting his inner man. All remained calm and still, however; and, after five rapid turns the good gentleman paused before the house, while a low voice addressed him from what Hamlet would call the cellarage, saying the talismanic words, "All's right!"

The moment his ear caught that sound, down he dived into the area, shutting the gate carefully behind; and, proceeding to a door which was comfortably concealed from observation under the steps as if it had been made for the purpose of being broken open, he rejoined his two companions, one of whom, about six inches taller and very nearly as many broader than himself, asked him, "What is to be done next?"

"Why, to the money-box and the plate-chest as fast as possible, Mr. William," replied the other; "the footman told me, as I told you, that the one was in the back-parlour, the other in the butler's pantry. Let us get a light and go up-stairs first."

By peculiar contrivances of their own a light was soon produced, and up the whole party marched, and entered a very splendid dining-room upon the ground-floor, where the first longings of their cupidity fixed upon the drawer of a side-board. But all had evidently been packed up before the family to whom the house belonged had quitted town, except one solitary silver crescent, fastened with a small chain, and inscribed with that mystic word so dear to the long-absent sailor,—“Port!” This the little sharp gentleman instantly slipped into his pocket, and opening a very solid door on one side, they entered a room which ran off to the back of the house, and which, by a splendid writing-table, a smaller table for a clerk, a multitude of shelves covered with japanned tin boxes, painted with the words, “House of Lords,” and manifold other signs and symptoms of business,—appeared to be, undoubtedly, the private room of an eminent lawyer. On either side of the fire-place, and on the side of the room next the door by which they entered, appeared the square, rough-scutured face of a large iron chest built into the solid wall, and by the aspect of these solemn guardians of the gifts of mammon, the eyes of the triumvirate who had entered were fixed in evident awe and admiration.

“Now which the devil is the right one,” cried the taller and more burly of the men; “if we could guess it would be better, for we may be kept here an hour opening all these.”

“O sir!” replied the little one, “I’ve got here, in my pocket, a bunch of persuaders what will open anything in that way, from a patent Security down to a common Bray-may.”

Thus saying, he produced a small bundle of odd-shaped irons, with which he approached the box that stood solitary in the wall, between the office and the dining-room, and which he probably respected more highly than the others, from its keeping aloof at a proud distance from the rest. One after another of his instruments did he apply to the key-hole, but without success, and having gone over them all again he was in the very act of condemning his own eyes, in the usual set form of a disappointed blackguard, when something gave a click, and exclaiming, “I’ve cotched it!” he threw the door wide open, exposing sundry drawers. The other gentlemen advanced, and held the light, and drawer after drawer was opened; but what was the disappointment of the whole party to find merely

vacancy till they came to the last, which contained nothing but an old faded paper, tied with red tape. The big man of the party took it up, and examined it; but the little one exclaimed, "O damn it, Bill! it's nothing but some devilish law-paper; come along!"

"Well, well! it's a matter of some consequence, depend upon it," replied the other: "it would not be here else, all alone in that cupboard; so I'll have it, my boy!" and he slipped it into his pocket.

They then proceeded to one of the other chests, near the side of the fire-place; but their booty was small, and disappointing. The other box, however, proved more productive, for in the lower drawer were found a roll of guineas; and with much satisfaction, the party of explorators divided the spoil between them, and proceeded on their search. First, however, they carefully and judiciously shut up,—ay, and even locked,—the iron safes which they had opened, and thus left the room without any memorial of their presence, except a slight vacancy in one or two of the drawers, which would not be soon detected.

They next marched direct upon the butler's pantry, where stood two ponderous plate-chests, screwed to the floor; but as it was not either of the chests which the gentlemen, whose visit we commemorate, wanted on the present occasion, but merely the contents, their satisfaction was not in the least diminished by the screws and iron bands which guarded against the abstraction of the depositories. The locks yielded as unresistingly as those of the other chests had done, and there, in the midst of chamois leather and silver paper, appeared many a goodly article of solid silver. The eyes of the three gentlemen, when they contemplated the inside of these plate-chests, grew rounder and more round, with that mixture of surprise and pleasure which has a tendency to expand the eyes and mouths of those who undergo its influence.

Then the personages we have mentioned commenced the work of packing up, and with aprons and glass cloths, which they found in abundance, enveloped the various articles of plate, arranging them as neatly and tidily, the one within the other, as ever did shopman in the gold and silver dwellings of Rundel, Hamlet, or Gray.

All this, however, occupied some time, and the hour of half past one had arrived—ere one-half of the silver had been placed in what was deemed the proper position for it

to occupy during the next three or four hours. It was at that precise moment of time that the creaking of some hinges made the whole party lift their heads, and gaze upon the door which led into the pantry, where they were occupied; and certainly the Echinades were less surprised and terrified at the wrathful aspect of Achelous, when they had forgotten to invite him to their sacrifice, than were our friends over the plate-chests, at the appearance of three or four faces very familiarly known in Bow Street.

The lanterns were dashed to the ground in a minute, and all was darkness; but, nevertheless two of them were grabbed in a minute, while big Bill dashed through the door which led into the adjoining room, in order to make his escape by the window through which he had carried much of the plate. The officer saw that he could not catch him; but as the housebreaker's burly figure darkened the aperture of the window, his pursuer drew a pistol from his coat and fired. A loud execration followed, and Bill rolled forward into the area, which was on a level with the flooring of the room. The next moment, however, he was upon his feet again, and the officer only reached the window in time to see him spring up the ladder as nimbly as ever, draw it up after him, and cross the yard.

He ran up, nevertheless, by the stairs, and with some difficulty unlocked the door and made his way out; but Big Bill had been before him, and nothing was to be seen of him for a moment. The instant after, however, the officer saw his shoulders appearing again, as he climbed over the wall of the next yard, which led to the mews; and though the distance was great, he took his chance, and gave him the contents of his second pistol. It was in vain, however; for without appearing injured, the man ran along the wall, and then jumped down into the mews. A number of the watch and patrol had by this time collected, and running out by the street door, the officer put them upon the track of the fugitive, sending some to either end of the mews; and then, feeling sure that his first shot had taken effect, he returned to his companions in the house, not doubting that the other would be overtaken ere he could run far.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE man whom we have called Williamson sat in his own house, some four days after the robbery which we have commemorated. The cup of his wretchedness was very nearly full, though there was still a drop to be added to it, for as yet he knew not of his son's death; but still the bitter potion trembled near the brim, for he had already seen all his schemes failing, and, as we know, had already lost all those gains which the agency of Lord Methwyn's estates had formerly bestowed. He had foreseen, even at Brussels, that the timidity of Lord Adair, and the unexpected meeting together of so many persons, whom he had long kept apart, might ultimately end in his total ruin; and he had next been thwarted in the bold rash scheme, which he had devised for averting that catastrophe by marrying his son to Helen Adair. Since we last saw him, however, he had taken one more step in the same course, and that step had but brought down upon him fresh calamity and shame. He had, in consequence of his son's letter, returned from England, whither he had proceeded in the first instance, to Calais, in order to make one more effort with regard to Helen; but Lacy had already obtained news of her probable destination, from the French officer he had taken—had communicated that news to Mary Denham; through her it had reached Colonel Adair, and though yet but half recovered, he had set out for Calais, and found his child in safety. A caning, such as man had seldom met with, was the first greeting which the lawyer received in Calais from Colonel Adair, for though the veteran officer could not yet walk very easily, he could stand firm; and from the moment he caught hold of the scoundrel's collar he ceased not to chastise him as long as he could strike a blow.

So terribly was he beaten, that for several days he was forced to keep his bed, but as soon as he could move he slunk out of Calais and hurried over to England, doubtful how to act or what to do, for some words had fallen from Colonel Adair, in the midst of his wrath, which showed the

wily lawyer that the secret of the will had transpired, and he now sat brooding over the bitter past, and resolving in his own mind many an impotent scheme of treachery, deceit, and revenge, and longing to wreak his hatred upon those whom he had most injured.

His first thought, indeed, had been to burn the will on which his fate depended, and then to set the world at defiance, secure that those he feared could prove no positive act against him. But when he came home and found that his house had been broken into, and partly robbed, he paused not till he had examined well each iron-chest, when, in the two next the fire-place, he discovered the defalcation of a few guineas, but in the other discovered the place void, which had so long been tenanted by that important paper.

Who can express his feelings when he made that discovery, and further ascertained from the Bow-street officers, that one of the housebreakers had escaped, and that no paper of any kind had been found upon the other two? The paper was gone, that was evident—a glance would show its vast import to the person into whose hands it had fallen, whosoever he might be—what might be the use he would make of it, no one could tell. How many chances were there that the person who possessed it would find out Colonel Adair, and for a stipulated sum place in his hands the document which had been purloined. On the other hand it might be still worse, if the thief should be caught. Then the paper would be produced before a body of magistrates, irrefragable proof would be afforded that he was the person who had concealed it, and that it had remained in his possession—in his, who had drawn it up, who had witnessed it, who knew its whole contents, and who was bound to see it put in force. Destruction stared him in the face—there was but one ray of hope—there seemed but one way of escape—to seek out by any plan that the cunning of the London police might suggest, the person who had taken the paper, and to buy it from him again at whatever price might be demanded.

Thus did he propose, with the usual blind folly of crime, to go stumbling on, piling offence after offence upon his own head, and still adding one black act more to hide those which had gone before. Everything round him had looked desolate and wretched; his house empty and dirtied by the feet of thieves and officers, without any attendant but a charwoman, without society, without friends, and with

no occupation but the bitter business of his own thoughts and evil purposes.

During the morning of the second day, however, two of his own servants, for whom he had sent, arrived from the country; his house assumed a more cheerful appearance, he took measures to insure that one part of his plan should succeed, and he sat down to an early dinner with some degree of appetite, proposing to proceed, immediately after the meal, in order to follow up the blow he had already struck. At the moment, however, when his wine, of which he had been taking a more than usual quantity, was again put upon the table after the cloth had been removed, a thundering knock was heard at the street-door, and the servant ran to open it.

The lawyer was seated in that back room which he usually employed as a sort of office, but in which he also dined when alone; and therefore not being able to see the carriage, or whatever it might be, which brought the visitors, and feeling a degree of hope reviving in his bosom, he bade the servant admit them, if they seemed gentlemen. The next minute Mr. Adair and Captain Lacy were announced, and though, perhaps, no two names could have been chosen more disagreeable to the ear of Mr. Williamson, yet he could not do otherwise than abide the infliction. Summoning up, therefore, all the dogged resolution of his nature, he rose and met his unwished-for guests with sulky civility, bowed to Lacy, and attempted to shake hands with Henry Adair. That ceremony the young gentleman, however, avoided, and pointing to seats, Mr. Williamson congratulated both upon their safe return to England, especially Captain Lacy, he said, who had been exposed to all the fury of a battle, such as Europe had seldom seen before; and he ended by asking when they had arrived.

"We arrived about three hours ago," replied Lacy, "towards mid-day, and having despatches to deliver, I paused at the Horse Guards, otherwise we should have been with you earlier, Mr. Williamson, as our business lies principally with you."

"Very happy, gentlemen!" replied the lawyer, "very happy to transact any business either with you or for you; you find me at dinner at an unseasonable hour; but I had much to do in the afternoon, and wished to get dinner over first. Smith, put glasses on the table. This Madeira is very choice, gentlemen."

"I never drink Madeira," replied Lacy, "nor any wine in the morning;" and Henry Adair making a reply of a similar nature, the servant, who had lingered about the dessert, withdrew and closed the door. Henry Adair then looked for a moment to Lacy, and Lacy replied by a slight nod, all of which caused the lawyer to move uncomfortably on his chair, by showing him that the business on which the two young gentlemen came was both serious and unpleasant.

Henry Adair, however, went on. "Mr. Williamson," he said,—proceeding, as usual with him, to the matter of his thoughts at once,—“Mr. Williamson, I come to you on two subjects; but to speak of one at a time, and to begin with the least painful first, I find that for twenty years or more you have been in possession of my great grandfather's last will, while my father has been using and enjoying a considerable portion of the property he possesses, under a previous will. I am furnished with proof of the fact, sir, under your son's voluntary declaration, and with the key of that iron chest in which it is contained, and I now come, in presence of an honourable witness, to demand it at your hands.”

"Sir!" said Mr. Williamson, taken by surprise for a moment, and assuming habitually an air of insolence, "Sir—sir! this is a very extraordinary proceeding—very extraordinary indeed, and I should certainly——"

"You should certainly do nothing without considering it well, Mr. Williamson," replied Lacy. "Pause a moment, and reflect, my good sir. You will find that we are neither people to be bullied by any one, nor likely to be deceived by anything but very consummate skill. Two of the witnesses to the will are now living, and in London, and you yourself are the third; we have your son's own declaration under his own hand, together with the whole history of the business, and the motives and purposes, on account of which you put that key in his possession. There is no possibility of evasion, Mr. Williamson, and the consequences to yourself will very much depend upon whether you do with a good grace that which you must do ultimately."

Lacy had given the lawyer time to reflect while he spoke, but the result was very different from what Lacy imagined. In that time, Williamson had quite recovered himself, and saw clearly all the advantages of his own situation. He was not a man to acknowledge his guilt till

the last moment, and he determined to grapple with the accusation directly.

"Captain Lacy," he said, "I neither wish, as you dare to insinuate, sir, to bully or to deceive any one, but I reply as I did before, that this conduct of yourself and your friend here is very extraordinary indeed. I know nothing of the document which you speak of. The late Lord Adair did, indeed, make some arrangements on his death-bed, and caused me to draw up some papers to which we procured the attestation of two or three witnesses, but those papers were of a totally different nature from what you suppose. I never heard of such a will, gentlemen, and as to what was told you by my son John, the boy must have been jesting."

"He was in no situation to jest, sir," replied Henry Adair; "and besides, he would not have carried the jest so far, even if he had jested, as to give me this key to the iron case, where the paper is, authorizing me, under his own hand, to take that paper, and telling me exactly how he possessed it."

"The boy must have been lying then, sir," replied the lawyer. "He always was a liar, you know, Mr. Henry; when you were at school with him, he was a desperate liar. All I can say is, I know nothing of the paper you speak of. Did I possess it, I certainly should not give it up to you, because neither of you gentlemen have any legal right, that I know of, to require a document affecting property that does not belong to you: but as I said before, [do not possess it." And assuming a tone of candour and fairness which was so completely unnatural to him, that no one who had enjoyed his acquaintance long and intimately could be taken in by it, he proceeded, "However, gentlemen, as I have now had the honour of an acquaintance with you for some years, and—whatever may have occurred unpleasant, Captain Lacy, between your father and myself, sir—have still a great respect both for him and you sir, I will do everything to satisfy you in this matter."

Lacy inclined his stately head coldly to the lawyer's expression of respect, not looking upon the extorted reverence of rogues as a highly-gratifying tribute. "I am afraid, Mr. Williamson," he replied, "that the only thing which could satisfy us would be the examination of that chest. We certainly do not intend to search it by force; but merely wish, in case you decline to produce the paper, to have your formal and distinct refusal to open and

examine before us the box in which your son positively declared the will was to be found."

"As to the paper, sir," replied Williamson, assuming a tone of sharp impatience, "I cannot produce it, for as I told you before, I do not possess it, and never heard of it till now; and as to the chest, sir, if my son has given you the key, sir, and authority to open it, you may do so with all my heart. It is his own chest. I gave it to him to keep his own papers in, concerning the little farm I made over to him; but the careless rascal I do not think put them there after all, and I do not know whether there be anything in it or not; but open it, gentlemen, open it, and satisfy yourselves. I know nothing about what it may contain—mind only, if you find the will you speak of, it is my son's business, not mine. I have nothing to do with it."

Henry Adair made no reply, but at once rose from his seat, and approaching the chest put the key into the lock. It fitted exactly, the lock turned and the heavy iron door moved back.

"Well, Captain Lacy, let us come and see what it contains," said Mr. Williamson, rubbing his hands; "I am as much in ignorance as you are."

Lacy and the lawyer approached, and drawer after drawer was opened and examined by Henry Adair, but all were void, and not a vestige of paper or document of any kind was to be found, except a ticket recording the name of the maker of iron fire-proof safes for the preservation of property from covetous men or the devouring element.

Henry Adair looked at Charles Lacy, and Charles Lacy for a moment bent his eyes upon the ground, but raising them the next moment somewhat suddenly to Mr. Williamson's face, he said, "I think I saw in a newspaper at the inn that your house had been broken into and robbed, Mr. Williamson; is it true?"

"Yes, sir! it is true, quite true—my house has been robbed—but, thank God, nobody has attempted to rob me of my character till to-day. I understand what you mean, sir—but you are mistaken. If you will read that paper, sir, pasted in the inside of the box, you will see those safes have locks which cannot be opened, and I will show you, sir, in order that you may do me justice another time, that the other boxes at least have not been opened, and taking forth his bunch of keys, he unlocked both the other chests, exposing to view a great mass of papers, and ex-

claiming, "There, sir! there! there they are just as I left them. The plate chests indeed"—he recollected them at that moment—"the plate chests indeed are not by the same maker, as it is not necessary to take such precautions with articles that can be purchased over again, as with invaluable documents like these. But none of these chests can be opened by any but the proper key, and so now, gentlemen, I hope that you feel you have done me wrong, and owe me an apology."

"No, Mr. Williamson, I cannot say that I do," replied Lacy, very calmly. "Neither myself nor my friend Adair have acted in this business upon anything but full and sufficient grounds. He has spoken to you of information derived from your son, and he had better, in our own support, read you the assignment which your son made of that box, and all that it contained, to him, which, connected with the story which your son told of the concealment of the paper, and with the testimony of my servant, William Newton, and of Adjutant Green, to the will having been made, fully justify us in the conduct we have pursued, and in the further steps which we shall of course institute."

"That's as you please," replied Mr. Williamson. "My son, sir, is a fool, and I am sorry to say, a liar. Adjutant Green may be a very honest man, but I will swear he was not in the room when the paper which he witnessed, and which was no will at all, was dictated by Lord Adair. The same applies to your servant, sir, Newton, if he be your servant, for him I have not heard of since—but my son is a liar, an egregious liar, not to be believed upon his oath. Well, sir, read the paper, it is the one I gave him, I see, when I gave him that chest to contain his papers—I remember it well."

"It is signed at Brussels, however, on the morning of the 15th of June," said Henry Adair, "and therefore implies that at that time there were some contents in——"

But here he was vehemently interrupted by Mr. Williamson, who had been looking over his shoulder. "That is not my son's handwriting, sir! that at the bottom of the paper—I do not know whose it may be, but that is not my son's."

"It is your son's, sir," replied Henry Adair, "for I saw him write it; and if you will read the attestation of the surgeon's assistant, you will see that it was owing to the state in which he was at the time that his hand is so unlike that which he usually wrote."

"Surgeon's assistant! state at the time!" cried Mr. Williamson, with a complete and for once unaffected change taking place in the expression of his countenance. "What do you mean, Mr. Adair? In the name of Heaven what do you mean? I know that he fought and was taken prisoner at Quatre-Bras, but he was not even wounded, for I have had two letters from him since. State he was in—surgeon's assistant—sir, you alarm and agitate me much."

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Williamson," replied Henry Adair, "that nothing which I have to tell you on the subject is calculated to allay your fears or decrease your agitation. On the contrary, all I have to communicate either on this or any other subject is of a distressing and painful nature."

"Speak, speak, sir," cried the lawyer, in dreadful agitation, "anything but suspense! Tell me what has happened! You have called him out," he added suddenly, "about that girl—you have shot him—a father's curse upon you! You have made yourself a murderer!"

"You mistake," replied Henry Adair, to whom he addressed his passionate adjuration, "I am no murderer nor duellist either. But your son, Mr. Williamson," he added, returning to the subject, and wishing to break the truth to him by degrees, "your son met with a severe accident just before that paper was signed. A horse that he had hired and was about to drive a short distance out of Paris ran away with him, and he was taken up seriously injured—very seriously injured."

Mr. Williamson rang the bell violently. "I will go directly!" he cried. "Order a post-chaise and horses this moment!" he continued, as the servant, who had kept as close to the door as servants generally do when anything important is going on, appeared with somewhat suspicious promptitude.

"Mr. Williamson, you had better pause a moment," said Lacy, making a sign to the servant to quit the room. "Hear what my friend Adair has to tell you! Your journey to Paris at this moment would be unnecessary!"

"Then he is dead!" cried the lawyer, "God of heaven! he for whom I have been toiling and thinking, and planning and scheming all my life, whom I thought to see a great man, and wealthy and happy, to die in this way. He is dead, he is dead!" and the large bitter drops of parental sorrow rolled from those keen and searching eyes over his red, coarse cheeks, while casting himself down in

a chair he buried his face in his hands, and groaned in the agony of the disappointed heart. "You say nothing!" he said, looking up to Lacy and Henry Adair, "you do not deny it; he is dead. Oh, gentlemen, gentlemen, this is terrible indeed!"

"I had hoped, Mr. Williamson," said Lacy, "that in sending your son to battle, you had prepared your mind to lose him, if such should be the will of God. I had trusted that you strengthened your heart to bear such a loss as is likely to befall every parent who has a child in the army."

"If he had died in battle, sir, I should not have felt it half so much," replied the lawyer; "but to die thus, when I thought him safe and all danger over—to die without honour or fame when he had passed through the bloody ordeal of war unscathed—to die thus, to die thus, mangled and tortured! O my poor boy, my poor boy!" And again the father overpowered every other feeling, and he wept bitterly and long. "Leave me, gentlemen," he said, at length, looking up, "leave me, I beseech you. I am not fit for any business, and I think you would not have the cruelty to urge me further, upon such a matter as that which brought you here, at a moment like this. If you have, take all my keys, examine everything you can find, turn the house out of the windows, if you please; but disturb not a father's grief mourning for the untimely fate of his first-born son."

It is hardly necessary to say that neither Lacy nor Adair availed themselves of the words of the unhappy lawyer to examine further; but after endeavouring to afford him some consolation they left him, resolving to take counsel with Colonel Adair upon the course to be pursued ere they proceeded to any ulterior measures. "We shall now most likely find my father returned to dinner," said Lacy, as they got into the carriage, "and you must, of course, make our house your home during your stay in London, Adair."

Henry Adair however declined, saying that he much preferred fixing his abode at Limmers'; "I shall see you as often as will be pleasant to you, Lacy," he said, "but now let the carriage drive first to Conduit-street, for I am anxious for an hour or two of solitary thought. I will join you before two hours are over."

Lacy offered no opposition, as he felt that Henry Adair was actuated by his own feelings and not by any false delicacy; and after having set him down at the hotel, he himself proceeded to Portman Square.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CHARLES Lacy was very much surprised to see that his father's servants were not at all surprised at the unannounced fact of his return to London; for giving way to the eager and impetuous spirit of Henry Adair, he had proceeded at once, on their arrival, to the door of the house of Mr. Williamson before he went anywhere else whatever, except to the Horse Guards. He naturally expected, therefore, to see eyes wide open upon his sudden appearance; but on the contrary, the porter at once threw the door wider than ordinary, in order to admit trunks and packages; and two of the other servants came out and began to aid his own servant in unloading, without giving a glance to himself as he entered the house. The butler, who had come up also, being an old servant, ventured to congratulate his young master upon his escape from all the perils and dangers of war; and added, that Lord Methwyn had desired his son might be informed, on his arrival, that he would be detained half-an-hour later than usual ere he could come home to dinner. The men could not tell, however, how their lord had obtained information of their young master's return, and Lacy was therefore obliged to wait patiently for his father's arrival. When that event took place, the peer shook him very cordially by the hand, and talked to him of the battle of Waterloo, keeping up a running fire of question and answer all the way as he walked on to his dressing-room, followed by his son and his valet.

At length, when his father made a moment's pause, Lacy interposed his question, saying, "So, sir, I find you expected me! Pray how did you hear of my being about to come over?—I did not know that I should be able to manage it myself, till six or eight hours before I set out."

"I expected you either to-day or to-morrow," replied the peer, in a quiet, equable tone; "to-day, or to-morrow, or the next day—the day before, or the day after, Charles, as the almanacks have it: and I gained the tidings accidentally from two sources. First of all, Lady Pontypool

called here this morning, and we had a long conference. She knew of your intended coming—how she did know I did not inquire.”

“Oh, I wrote to Mary in regard to my intention,” replied Lacy, “but that was only if I could get leave, or despatches, or something; but I had no idea that my good Aunt Pontypool was likely to come over herself. Has she left Mary at Brussels, then?”

“Oh, no!” replied Lord Methwyn, “Lady Mary is here in town, arrived late last night,—with her husband Major, now Colonel, Kennedy, dreadfully wounded, poor fellow, and not yet able to cross the room without assistance. However, his wounds have got him a very pretty little wife with a splendid fortune. From what I hear there are as yet no settlements, but that we must see to. However you made a great mistake there, Charles—a very great mistake indeed. But there is no use in talking about matters that are irremediable, and so, to go on, I heard of your having set out actually, from a gentleman of the name of Green, who was inquiring for you this morning, when I was going out. He thought you and Mr. Henry Adair must have arrived, as he said Lord Adair knew of your departure from Paris when he, this Mr. Green, left Brussels. He seemed very anxious indeed to see you, but did not tell me what he wanted. A very gentleman-like sort of person he appears to be.”

“He has distinguished himself very much in the service,” replied Lacy, “and raised himself from the ranks by merit and courage. We were detained at Calais four-and-twenty hours by bad weather, which prevented the packets from sailing. That is the cause of my being later than might have been expected. Did Lady Pontypool give you no news?” he added, not a little suspicious of the worthy lady’s proceedings.

“Oh dear, yes! She gave me a great deal of news indeed!” replied Lord Methwyn, drily, “but we will talk about that after dinner, Charles. I never like to derange my gastronomic anticipations by anything disagreeable, and therefore, although I know a word between you and me will settle the whole quite satisfactorily, yet we will not talk upon any business at present. In the meantime tell me—I wish, Lauzun, you would get some other mille-fleur, I told you so yesterday. That is abominable, it smells like a shop. Tell Delcroix that he must have made some mistake to send me such stuff as that.—In the meantime tell me, Charles, why have you not brought

young Adair with you?—I should have been very happy to see him, you know."

"I took upon me to say so," replied Lacy, "but he is both fatigued to death, and a good deal agitated by some business he has had to do of a very painful nature, and therefore preferred dining at Limmers', and taking an hour or two's repose; but he will be here in the course of the evening."

"I hope so," said Lord Methwyn, "though the news I have to tell him is not very good. I had it from that Mr. Green, who seemed as anxious to see him as to see you. His father had been taken violently ill after receiving a letter from his son then in Paris; and Mr. Green said he feared he would die. A very gentleman-like person, that Mr. Green; if I had been sure you would arrive to-day I would have asked him to meet you at dinner."

Lacy smiled at the fancy which his father seemed to have taken for honest Adjutant Green, the most opposite man in the world to himself, and shortly after, dinner having been announced, father and son proceeded to the dining-room. Lacy ate very little; his father did tolerably, and proceeded in no degree the more rapidly because his son sat uneasy and impatient to hear all the news which Lady Pontypool had brought over with her to the shores of England. But at length the clear mahogany shone in the light of the declining sun, and bright decanters saw themselves reflected in the brown mirror spread out beneath their feet.

"I hear that old Colonel Adair has behaved most gallantly," said Lord Methwyn, suddenly laying his hand upon the handle of the claret-jug.

Lacy thought, in his inward heart, that the commencement was not so bad as might have been expected, and he replied, "Nobody more, sir; the duke, I understand, has especially marked his services for the attention of his majesty."

"So I saw," replied Lord Methwyn; "he was here this morning, but, unfortunately, I was out. He wished to see me particularly, he said."

"Colonel Adair?" asked Lacy, in as quiet a tone as he could command in the whole diapason.

"Yes," answered his father, "Colonel Adair I mean—I did not refer to either the king or the duke."

"He left his address as No. 160, or 70, Piccadilly, but William, my groom, can tell me exactly, for he took a

note for me to the old gentleman. He wished to see me, and I appointed two o'clock to-morrow; but I was rendered desirous, in the first place, to settle the base of our conference, from what I had heard from my Aunt Pontypool in the morning."

Lacy perceived that the matter must be brought to an issue; and as his father kept skirmishing at a distance, unwilling to fire the first gun, he determined that he would, and therefore asked at once, "Well, and what news did my Aunt Pontypool bring?"

"Why, Charles," replied Lord Methwyn, leaning himself a little back in his chair, with a half smile upon his countenance, as if what he were about to tell were amongst the pleasant things of this world,—“Why, Charles, the news greatly concerns you, my dear fellow. I do not know on what story the old expression of ‘letting the cat out of the bag’ is founded, but certainly no one ever possessed the faculty of doing so more than our good Aunt Pontypool. She was here this morning, actuated by the very laudable and pious purpose of persuading me that the very best thing for you, in every respect, would be to marry that pretty little creature, Helen Adair. Now, Charles, I see very clearly that you have been doing as I foresaw you would, and have gone on flirting with Miss Adair till it is difficult to retreat. But it is lucky for you young men when you have a father behind your hand, who is willing to act the part of a friend as well as a father to you, and to get you out of any of these little scrapes, as fast as you get yourself into them. I therefore determined at once to take all the responsibility on myself, and consequently wrote to Colonel Adair, telling him that it was an arrangement which I could not hear of for one moment. Now do not be alarmed, Charles, or look so vexed; I did not act harshly in the least—I wrote in the most kind and polite tone that you can conceive. I told him that I was sure his own feelings would quite confirm mine upon the subject, spoke in the highest terms of the young lady, and said that from all I had had the pleasure of seeing of himself, I was perfectly convinced his own honourable delicacy of feeling would make him perceive that it was absolutely necessary for any lady entering into a family like mine, by marrying my only son, to meet us upon equal terms; and so I left the matter, repeating how happy I should be to receive his visit at the hour of two, and to cultivate more intimately an acquaintance, which, though short, had afforded me great pleasure.”

Lacy remained silent for some moments ; but then seeing that the peer was about to begin again, and wishing much to have out his own part of the dialogue before his brain got confused, or excited, or stupefied, by all the unpleasant feelings that were busy at his heart, he replied as dutifully as he could find in his heart to do. "I am extremely sorry, sir," he said, "that you have thought it necessary to take this step, as it will compel me, I am grieved to say, to make my formal proposal to Colonel Adair for his daughter's hand, before the period which I had fixed for that purpose. Just hear me, my lord, to a conclusion. I have, as you say, gone so far in my addresses to Miss Adair, that even if I did not wish it, I should feel myself bound to go on in the most decided manner, if I desired to possess my own esteem, and to feel myself, as I always have done hitherto, a man of honour."

"But, Charles," interrupted his father, "this renders it all the more fortunate that I have acted as I have done, as it will throw the onus of withdrawing from the business entirely upon Colonel Adair, without your being in the slightest degree implicated in the affair. The very means have been taken that you could desire for preserving appearances, and the matter will drop naturally without any step on your part."

"It cannot, and it must not, so drop, my lord," replied Lacy ; "my attachment to Miss Adair is not a matter of idle levity, as you believe. You have acted upon a wrong estimation of my feelings ; but I trust that when you are aware of what those feelings really are, you will alter your views upon the subject. I love Helen Adair, sir, in a manner which will not permit any trifling with my affections ; and if I am not fortunate enough to obtain her hand, depend upon it I shall never marry any other person."

"O, but this is nonsense, Charles," replied his father with an incredulous smile ; "this is all romance ! Your cousin Mary has infected you. Young men get over these love-fits very easily. I will recommend you a few doses of Peruvian bark, and a couple of bottles of claret per diem. It will work a cure, depend upon it, if you take it long enough."

Lacy was provoked, but he commanded himself. "You are entirely mistaken, my dear father," he replied ; "and I think if you will take the trouble to look back upon my former life, and to remember that I have now reached the age of six-and-twenty without being troubled with any of these love-fits you speak of, you will do me justice, which you do not at present. But still further, I must tell you

that this attachment has not remained uncombated in my own bosom, and that the reason of my going to Paris last year, and remaining there during the whole autumn and winter, which you thought very strange, was for the purpose of endeavouring to overcome the love which I thought was only just rising in my heart. I found, my lord, that it could not be overcome; and it was only after I had tried every means to crush it in vain, that I at length yielded to it."

"Then, Charles," said his father decidedly, "you yourself must have seen and felt all the objections which exist to such an alliance, and are only led towards it, you confess, by blind passion. How can you expect that I, who am actuated by no such passion, should consent to that which was so objectionable in your own eyes, that you took every means to conquer the weakness which impelled you to commit it?"

"You mistake me, sir," replied Lacy. "I saw but one objection: I neither looked upon the passion as a weakness, nor its object as unworthy of all my endeavours: but I knew that on one unfortunate point the alliance might be objectionable in your eyes, and it was to meet your wishes, such as I believed I should find them, to avoid giving you pain, or causing you uneasiness, that I subjected myself to a struggle of many months against feelings of which I am individually proud."

Lord Methwyn was silent for several minutes, for he could not help appreciating his son's conduct, although, as we have shown long ago, he was not a man to yield many steps on any subject where either pride or interest were concerned. "I am obliged to you, Charles," he said at length, "for having considered my opinion in this matter more than, from Lady Pontypool's showing, I believed you to have done. I certainly do disapprove of the marriage—I certainly think, and ever shall think, that in choosing a wife you should look for such a portion with her as your own fortune and rank entitle you to expect. Under these circumstances, your union with Miss Adair, though I can in no degree object to her family, can never have my approval; but, perhaps, had I known that you had already, in consideration of my views, endeavoured so long and so judiciously to overcome this unfortunate passion, I should not have written to Colonel Adair in the way I have done. From Lady Pontypool's account, however, it seemed to me, though she did not exactly say so, that you were going on with this young lady in a wild, heedless way, without any

regard to what was right, or what was pleasing to me, or any one else."

"Oh, my Aunt Pontypool! my Aunt Pontypool!" exclaimed Lacy aloud; "far, far from it, my dear sir. If Lady Pontypool would but learn to guide her kindness by a little discretion, and believe that other people know their own business best, how much mischief would be spared! The simple fact, sir, is, that when I went down to _____ last summer, I met Miss Adair, and very soon learned to feel for her as I never felt for any woman before."

"She is certainly a very charming girl," rejoined his father, "there is no denying it, Charles."

"As soon, however, as I became aware of what I did feel," Lacy continued, "I thought instantly of your opinion upon the subject, saw that there might be objections, and I confess, by a great effort, tore myself away; went to Paris, entered as much as possible into society, and did everything that I possibly could to drive the thought of Helen Adair out of my head: but I found it all in vain, and returned, intending to do what I could to obtain your consent. I found Colonel Adair's situation changed infinitely for the worse; I saw evidently that his own pride would prevent him listening to my proposal if made then; and I determined—while I assisted to the utmost of my power, in the effort to better his fortunes—to wait patiently, in hopes that they might become such as would remove any objections on your part, and prevent any opposition on his; but of course, in the meantime, it could scarcely be expected that I should not let Helen Adair perfectly understand what were my feelings respecting her."

"Well, Charles, I am very sorry for you," replied his father, with a kind of sigh which certainly might express as much weariness of the subject, as grief for his son's disappointment; "you have acted a great deal better, and more prudently, than I thought; and as for old Colonel Adair, from what I saw of him at Mary's, it is quite evident that he is the last man who would seek to entrap any man into an unequal match. He is as proud as a fallen angel, or a Welsh knight, that is clear, and had I known all this before, I might not have written as I have written; but, on the contrary, should have tried to make up my mind to look quietly on upon what I could not prevent. As it is, however, I am afraid the old gentleman will have heard too much of my opinion to relish the matter."

"But now, my dear father," said Lacy, "now that you know what my feelings are, that you are aware that having

tried all that mortal power could do to conquer those feelings I have found it impossible, and that if I do not marry Miss Adair I shall certainly never marry any one else—now that you know all this, let me ask, may not those opinions be so far softened down to Colonel Adair, that he may be induced, on his part, to give the consent that you, on your part, are kind enough to say you would not withhold?"

"No, Charles!" replied Lord Methwyn, "I have unfortunately been induced to give Colonel Adair my opinions on the subject; they are my opinions still, and ever will be my opinions, and I cannot even in the slightest degree retract or modify them. I am very sorry for you, my dear Charles, and would do anything in my power to make you happy in your own way. Indeed, any little wishes or prejudices—if you like to call them so—of mine, I would sacrifice at once, seeing that you have endeavoured to sacrifice your passion to my opinions; but I cannot deny in any shape, or even conceal, now that I have once avowed them, what those opinions are; and, as to your never marrying, Charles, and all that, it is mere romance. You will get over all that, my dear son."

"Did you ever know me, sir, swerve in the slightest degree from those resolutions which I had formed, as I have formed this, upon long and deliberate consideration of the whole circumstances?" demanded Lacy.

"Why, no, my dear boy," replied his father, with a smile; "you are pretty obstinate, I must confess; but still, Charles, you know that reversing the nurse's old observation, 'your father takes after you,' in that respect. But not to jest upon a serious subject, Charles, you must feel yourself that it is perfectly impossible for me to deny opinions that I have written down, to say that I do not still entertain them, or to suffer any one to suppose that they will ever be altered. If, knowing as he does what I think of the matter, Colonel Adair chooses to give you his daughter, I shall make no opposition, will willingly receive your pretty little wife, and do everything that is kind by her."

"And now, Charles—do not keep all the wine beside you—I must leave you to act in the business as you may judge proper; but you certainly cannot say that I am acting the harsh or even the unkind father, my dear boy. I have as much consideration for your weaknesses, Charles, I can assure you, as I have for my own; and no man knows how to treat his own particular foibles with greater tenderness than I do—as you well know."

"You have acted far more kindly in the business than I expected, or perhaps had any right to expect," replied Lacy, who had in truth been somewhat surprised at the consideration which Lord Methwyn had shown for his feelings. How the peer might have acted had he seen Lacy before Lady Pontypool, is unnecessary to inquire—it would be a piece of minute anatomy perhaps not quite fair to practise on the good lord's heart. Certain it is, however, that Lord Methwyn, who had a good deal of discrimination in regard to human character, so far understood that of Colonel Adair, that he calculated that there were about a hundred thousand chances to one against the old officer listening to Lacy's proposal for one moment after the note which had been sent to him in the morning. He, therefore, could afford to be considerate; although I do not mean absolutely to say that this conviction regarding Colonel Adair did really influence his conduct towards his son.

He sipped his wine, however, and ate a '*longue-vie*' between the sips with great tranquillity of mind and body, while his son, leaning with his elbow on the table, his head upon his hand, and his untasted wine in the glass, gave way to that idle, seducing, Achelous-like fiend, speculation. As he thus thought—sometimes remembering Colonel Adair's rigid principles and honourable pride, and feeling as sure as his father that the old officer would hold out to the last—sometimes hoping that perseverance and entreaty, and Helen's love, might soften him and make him yield at last—Mr. Adair was announced.

Henry Adair, according to his promise, had now made up his mind to rejoin his friend, though partly distaste to all society at the moment, partly a sort of shy antipathy to meeting with strangers, unless some extraordinary circumstance brought them within his sphere of feelings, had made him linger after the period he had at first assigned for proceeding to Portman Square.

"You have dined, I presume, Mr. Adair?" said Lord Methwyn, who had seen him once before.

"Yes, I dined at the hotel," he replied; "I like dining at hotels, for one can do anything else one pleases at the same time, without offending any one but the waiter. Besides, I wished to write a letter while I fed; and therefore," he added, remembering the forms of society,—“I declined the invitation that Lacy was kind enough to make me.”

"Pray, may I ask, if the question be not imper-

tenant," said Lord Methwyn, "were you writing to your father?"

"Yes," replied Henry Adair, "yes, I have not written to him since I was in Paris. But there may be letters from him here—I forgot—I took the liberty, my lord, of begging him to address them to your house, with which liberty your son assured me that you would not feel offended."

"Not at all!" replied Lord Methwyn. "None have arrived that I know of. But I heard of your father accidentally this morning. He was still at Brussels."

"Yes, of course," said Henry Adair, musing; "he would not leave it yet I should think. Did you hear of his health, my lord?"

"Why the account was not particularly favourable," replied Lord Methwyn. "He had not been very well."

"Indeed!" cried Henry Adair, all the affectionate son rising up in his bosom and sparkling in his eyes, "not seriously ill, my lord, I trust?—not in danger—did your informant say?"

"Why he represented his illness as somewhat alarming," replied Lord Methwyn; "a threatening of apoplexy, I think, he said. My informant was a gentleman of the name of Green."

"What, Charles Green, the adjutant!" cried Henry Adair, starting up with grief and anxiety in his countenance, "I will go to him directly! Where is he to be found?"

"I really cannot tell," replied Lord Methwyn; "he did not leave his address, and I foolishly did not ask it."

"You will hear at the agents of the regiment, Adair," joined in Lacy, who had scarcely spoken further than was sufficient to establish the conversation between his friend and Lord Methwyn. "Cox and Greenwood are the people, I think. I will walk with you if you are going, for my head aches a good deal."

"Will you not take coffee before you go?" asked the peer. "Charles, ring the bell."

"No, I will go directly," replied Henry Adair. "I beg you to pardon me, Lord Methwyn, but I am anxious for my father—very anxious indeed. I have a great mind to set out for Brussels at once."

"You had better hear what Green says upon the subject in the first place," said Lacy. "You are not in a fit state to travel, Adair, without some repose. Shall we go to Greenwood's?"

Henry Adair expressed his readiness, and Lacy and his

friend taking their hats, issued forth into the streets, once more leaving Lord Methwyn to moralise, over his wine, upon the eager and hasty nature of youth.

"I shall set off for Brussels either to-night or early to-morrow morning," said Henry Adair, ere they had got a hundred yards from the door. "I am sure, Lacy, you will do me the kindness of pursuing to a close the business which brought me over here. Communicate the facts at once to Colonel Adair when you can find him. Let him take what measures he likes; I will make no stipulations, though my heart bleeds for my father; and I fear that what I wrote from Paris may have caused his illness."

"I trust not," replied Lacy; "but Adair, you have the satisfaction of having done your duty; and, perhaps, in regard to communicating with Colonel Adair, it may even be better to leave the matter in my hands, as a third person can suggest those calm and private measures which you would feel a delicacy in proposing."

"I would propose no measures to him whatever," replied Henry Adair; "I have no right to ask any forbearance. You can do what you like—I trust to you entirely, Lacy. As far as my father is concerned, I will do all that I can to induce immediate restoration of what has been unjustly withheld; and should he die," he added with a degree of bitter calmness, "should he die, you may assure Colonel Adair that, perfectly convinced of his right, I would not be an hour without doing him justice."

Lacy and Henry Adair had reached the end of Sackville Street, ere they remembered that the agents' offices had long been closed, and that not a single melancholy clerk would be found to give even a surly reply to their ill-timed questions. As such convictions sometimes do, this recollection came upon them both at the same moment, and they simultaneously stopped and mutually expressed it.

"You must seek him, then, as a last resource, at my cousin Mary's," said Lacy; "good Lady Pontypool took a great fancy to the worthy adjutant, and it is most likely that if they came over on the same day, and in the same ship, which, from my father's account, I suspect they did, Lady Pontypool will be able to give you his address. In the meantime, I will go and seek out Colonel Adair, and will meet you either at Limmers' or at my father's house in a couple of hours. It is now near nine o'clock, and if I delay, I cannot call on the colonel to-night. Otherwise I

would go with you; but you know the whole party at Mary's, and your anxiety is a good reason for calling at such an hour."

"With such anxieties as are at this moment in my bosom," replied Henry Adair, "I am but too little likely to stand upon ceremony with any one. I fear that my abrupt impetuosity may have killed my father, Lacy. I have been right in my actions, perhaps, but not in the manner, and my heart is ill at ease indeed. Well, in two hours, at Limmers' I shall expect you. Farewell!" And thus they parted for the time.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CHARLES LACY walked up Piccadilly, and on arriving at the door, he knocked, and, in a moment after, a very neat woman-servant made her appearance.

"Is Colonel Adair at home?" demanded Lacy.

"Colonel Adair, sir? No sir! no!" replied the girl, with a sort of confusion of manner which Lacy did not understand.

"This is very unfortunate," said Lacy. "However, give Colonel Adair that card, and tell him Captain Lacy will call upon him before eleven o'clock to-morrow, upon very particular business."

"Captain Lacy!" said the servant, hesitating. "Captain Lacy! oh dear! I dare say I may tell you, sir: for the colonel said, when he went out in the morning, that he wanted very much to see you. He mentioned your name twice."

"You dare say you may tell me?" replied Lacy, "What do you mean, my good girl? can you tell me where the colonel is to be found?"

"No, sir, that I cannot!" replied the girl; "all I can tell is, that he was arrested this afternoon, about three o'clock, poor gentleman! The young lady would go with her papa, say what he would; and Louisa, her maid, set off directly for some great relations she said they had. I cannot tell what prison they took him to; but master can tell, I dare say, sir, if you'd like to see him."

"Certainly," replied Lacy, mastering the emotions to

which these tidings gave rise ; " certainly ; show him my card, and tell him I wish to speak with him."

The girl, without reply, retreated to a back parlour, and after a moment's consultation with some one within, re-appeared, and besought Lacy to enter. The person whom the room contained seemed a retired tradesman of the better class ; and from him Lacy heard the same story, with a very slight variation, which the servant had told. Colonel Adair, he said, had come into his lodgings the evening before, and had been arrested about three o'clock for a debt of six hundred pounds. He had declared, in hearing of the landlord, that the debt was fictitious, if not in whole, at least in great part, and had desired to retain his lodgings, saying that the whole business must speedily be cleared up.

" At whose suit was he arrested, may I ask ?" said Lacy.

" The name was Williamson, I think," replied the landlord.

Lacy's patience gave way, and he stamped his foot upon the ground, exclaiming, " The scoundrel !"

" I was quite sure that there was something wrong in the whole affair, sir," said the landlord, " and so I told my servant not to say anything about it, for fear it should mortify the gentleman when he gets out,—for he is quite a gentleman, I see ;—and I offered too, to go anywhere he liked for bail, and to be as kind as possible to the young lady ; but he would not let me go for bail, and Miss Adair would go with her father, though I told her that I knew it was shockingly dear living in a spunging-house."

" Pray to what place did they take him ?" asked Lacy.

" There is the address, sir,—No. —, Chancery Lane," replied the landlord ;—" are you going there to-night ?"

" Directly," answered Lacy : " Colonel Adair did not know that I was in town, or I doubt not he would have sent to me. However, the debt is undoubtedly false, and means must be taken for punishing the scoundrel Williamson."

" Jane ! Jane ! bring down the note that was left !" exclaimed the landlord, calling to the maid. " Perhaps, sir, you would be kind enough to take this note to Colonel Adair, it was left, not long after he went, by a person who seemed anxious he should have it soon."

" I dare say it is from my father, Lord Methwyn," replied Lacy, in great hopes that the peer's epistle had thus been stopped by the way ; but on looking at the address, he perceived that it was written in a very different hand ;

and putting it in his pocket, he wished the landlord good-night, and turned again to the street.

A hackney-coach was his immediate resource; telling the coachman to drive as quick as he could go to Chancery Lane. On arriving at the door he knocked sharply. It was opened by a stout man with a red waistcoat, who replied to his inquiries for Colonel Adair,—“O yes, sir!—walk in. The parlour on the left, sir. We’ve given the Colonel the best rooms, ’cause we’ve no other lodgers at present, sir.”

With a beating heart Lacy opened the door, and still more violently did his heart palpitate at the sight he saw. It was a small, dull room, with bars before the windows; and up and down, in the scanty space which it afforded, Colonel Adair was walking slowly and with difficulty, on account of his wound, but with his head still erect, and his eye full of indignant fire, raised to the opposite spot on the wall; while on one of the worn horse-hair chairs which the room contained, sat his daughter Helen, looking as lovely in her deep sorrow as in the moments of her brightest happiness. Her beautiful eyes were fixed full upon her father, but at the opening of the door she turned them thither, and starting up with a glad cry, she exclaimed, “O, here is Charles!—here is Captain Lacy, papa!”

Colonel Adair turned, and instantly grasped Lacy warmly by the hand. “This is very kind of you, Lacy,” he said; “and yet I dare scarcely say, that I am happy to see you.”

“I comprehend why, my dear sir,” replied Lacy, shaking his hand; “but yet I trust to make you say that you are happy to see me before we part. Helen, dear Helen, do not weep, for all must and will go well yet. First, let us think of setting the present unpleasant business to rights. I understand that Williamson, that atrocious scoundrel, has arrested you on a false debt, my dear colonel, and we must have you bailed out immediately.”

“Not altogether false, as far as I can learn,” replied the old officer. “In the first place there is a debt of some sixty or seventy pounds, for different accoutrements, due to a man to whom Williamson himself recommended me. The fellow would not send in his bill before I joined. It, of course, I could and would pay, but it seems that Williamson has bought up the debt and joined to it what he has the impudence to call his bill for law expenses. He never did any business for me in his life, that I know of,

for which he was not paid years ago. But as to bailing me, Lacy, I cannot suffer you to do so. Though there is no man for whom I entertain so deep a regard, yet there are circumstances, as you well know, which render that impossible."

"Oh, papa!" cried Helen, "consider, do consider!"

"I have considered, my child, and it cannot be," replied Colonel Adair; "deeply grieved am I to wring your young and affectionate heart, my dearest child—deeply, deeply to return you pain and sorrow, Charles Lacy, for all the comfort and happiness you have at various times given me; but I think it my duty, Lacy—I feel that honour calls me to say now at once and for ever, that my daughter shall never, with my consent, enter into a family that is unwilling to receive her. Do not think that I am either hasty or angry, Lacy," he continued, seeing his friend about to speak with some eagerness, "I confess that a little time ago I was rather vexed at what I thought was like concealment; but Helen has shown me that we were suddenly called away from Alton at the very moment she was about to tell me all, and has reminded me that no opportunity has since presented itself. But I have since thoroughly weighed the matter, and your father's note of this morning is quite enough."

"But, my dear sir," replied Lacy, "I had not seen my father when he wrote that note; he had then but a very imperfect view of the whole business, gathered from a somewhat indiscreet communication of Lady Pontypool, who called upon him this morning for the purpose of telling him all she knew of the business; and——"

"She might have saved herself that trouble," said Colonel Adair, "for I informed her—as the person from whom I myself received my only information—before I left Brussels, that I should proceed to London as fast as possible, in order to communicate personally with Lord Methwyn; but I beg your pardon, Lacy—you were about to say——"

"That I have since seen my father," continued Lacy; "that I have told him the exact truth, in every respect; that I have corrected several erroneous impressions which Lady Pontypool, with the best intentions in the world, had given him; and that he permits me to say that he will in no degree oppose my marriage to my beloved Helen, and that he will receive her with every kindness as my wife and his daughter."

A bright light beamed up in Helen's eyes, the light of

joy and happiness, which the warm blushes on her cheeks did not serve to conceal, but rather to heighten, and for a moment an expression of satisfaction passed over the fine countenance of the old soldier, but it vanished again in an instant.

"But that note, Lacy," he said, "that note—nothing can have occurred to alter his opinion since that note was written, because nothing but misfortune has befallen to alter my situation. My daughter can no more enter your family upon equal terms than she could then, and in it I find his views definitely stated, that no one could or should be received into any house where she does not come as an equal in all respects. Lacy, it cannot be! The rich Lord Methwyn shall never have to say that his son with my consent married the daughter of Adair the beggar." And rising from the chair on which he had flung himself while this discussion was taking place, he again began to pace the little room.

Helen wept in silence, although Lacy by look and sign endeavoured to comfort her, while he replied more immediately to her father. "Indeed," he said, "you have understood my father too harshly. But my first anxiety is to free you from your present situation, that the machinations of that villain Williamson may not prove effectual. Suffer me to arrange this affair for you."

"Impossible, Lacy! impossible!" replied Colonel Adair; "my mind has been in such a state of confusion since I have been here, that I have not been able to think correctly on what I ought to do under these circumstances. I shall be able to do so between to-night and Monday morning, but in the meantime it is clear that I cannot accept the assistance which I know you would kindly afford."

"You are wrong," said Lacy, mortified at the old officer's pertinacity, "you do not consider to what you are exposing yourself—you do not consider to what you are exposing Helen. Very soon your only cause for opposing our union will be removed, I have no doubt; and then how mortifying will it be to reflect that you have remained in this wretched place two nights unnecessarily, because you would not receive any assistance from a man attached to you by so many feelings as myself."

"But I do not understand you, Lacy," rejoined Colonel Adair; "you say all obstacles will shortly be removed—what do you mean?"

"It is somewhat long to tell," replied Lacy, "and I

much wish that you would let me first restore you to your own house, where you could act at once upon the information I am about to give you. Now I think of it, we have a mutual friend in London, who, I am sure, will instantly do all that is necessary to free you from this unpleasant situation, since you will not accept of my assistance. What think you of our worthy acquaintance, Mr. Owen Snipes? He is intimate with your excellent friend, Dr. Bellingham—he is a perfect lover of Helen—he is never out of town—and will be here in a moment. Let me write him a note.

"I am already that gentleman's debtor," said the colonel, "to a considerable amount, and it is but right that he should know my exact situation. Write to him then, Lacy, if you like; I would do it myself, but I doubt my powers of composing anything like common sense at this moment."

Pen and ink were easily procured, and Lacy wrote a few hurried lines to his worthy lawyer, explaining Colonel Adair's exact situation, and begging him to come to his aid immediately.

The note was instantly dispatched to the dwelling of the lawyer, and Lacy, prevailing upon Colonel Adair to sit down, to which he had a great distaste, under his agitation of mind, turned as quickly as possible to the subject of Henry Adair, fearful of any new prohibitions and objections, if he suffered the old officer's thoughts to revert to Helen.

"Henry Adair, the son of your cousin, Lord Adair, has repeated to me a very curious, and to you interesting, discovery, which you made through Adjutant Green, of the — dragoons."

"Yes!" said Colonel Adair; "yet it can scarcely be called a discovery either. At least it will lead to no good. My grandfather, I dare say, did repent of his harshness to the son of his favourite child, and did, I doubt not, make a new will upon his death-bed. But that rascal, Williamson, put the will in the fire, depend upon it—it is a thing done every day, as we all know. It is burnt, be sure of that Lacy, and if you found your hopes of a change in my affairs being brought about by anything connected with that will, you build upon air, Lacy—upon thin air!"

"I feel convinced that it has not been burnt!" replied Lacy; "and have proof positive that, if it be so, the destruction of that document has taken place very lately. Do you think that Williamson would commit such an act for another man's benefit? Do you think that he would

lose his hold of such power over your cousin, Lord Adair, as the possession of that will gave him, by burning it? Do you think that he would so eagerly seek a marriage between his son and your daughter, as almost to risk an act of felony to bring it about, if he had not possessed in his own hands the means of making that marriage a mine of wealth for himself? No, no, my dear colonel, all this would be proof sufficient that the will has been very lately in existence, and is so in all probability now, even if I had no other proof, which, however, I have. Young Williamson was taken prisoner at Quatre-Bras——"

"Oh, yes, yes; I know all that story!" cried Colonel Adair, his eyes flashing with the very remembrance; "and how the audacious villain dared to give out that my Helen was his wife. I wish I had caught him; I would have horsewhipped him as well as his father, till I took the flesh off his back—the pitiful, lying, mean-spirited scoundrel!"

"I took that part of the affair upon myself," replied Lacy; "and I do not think, my dear sir, that even you could have done it more completely than I did."

"You did? you did?" cried Colonel Adair, grasping his hand and shaking it heartily. "Thank you, Lacy! thank you! I am very much obliged to you!"

Lacy went on. "I sought him out whenever I could get into Paris, and treated him as I think he deserved. A challenge was of course the consequence; but he met with a severe accident on the very morning appointed. He was driving a wild young horse which ran away, and he was taken up mortally injured. But now comes the curious part of the story. It seems that, through life, this Lord Adair has been, in a great degree, a mere tool to that villain Williamson, rendered so undoubtedly by the power which the lawyer has over him. Henry Adair has been suffered to keep company with this unfortunate young man, was sent to the same schools with him, and even was to have been his second in the affair with myself, though he did not know that I was the person. He, however, remained with young Williamson till he died, and heard from him, as he was dying, the whole story of the will, its nature, its concealment, and where it was preserved. Still more; the young scoundrel, it would seem, ere he consented to the scheme against our beloved Helen, extorted from his father the key of the chest in which it was kept, and that key he put into the hands of Henry Adair."

"Good God, this is very strange!" exclaimed Colonel

Adair, starting up, and again pacing the little parlour; "very strange indeed, Lacy—after more than twenty years!"

"Well," continued Lacy, "I need not tell you—for his very manner, his every word is convincing—that your young cousin is as enthusiastic in his ideas of honour, as any Adair that ever yet lived. He communicated the whole facts to me, and we set off instantly for England, I anxious to hear of Helen, and he desirous to do the long-delayed act of justice. Our first visit was to Williamson's house, but there we were disappointed;" and Lacy proceeded to detail all that occurred in the interview with the lawyer. Colonel Adair's countenance fell, however, when he heard that the paper was not in the box, where it had been supposed to be, and he said with a sigh, "But Henry Adair, where is he, poor fellow? It must be a bitter undertaking for him, indeed."

"He sets off either to-night or to-morrow morning for Brussels," replied Lacy. "The fact is, he wrote to his father in the first heat of this painful discovery, and since then my father has learned that Lord Adair has had a stroke of apoplexy."

"Pray, from whom was it that Lord Methwyn heard of Lord Adair's illness?" asked Colonel Adair.

"It was from Adjutant Green," replied Lacy.

"Adjutant Green!" said the colonel; "I wonder he did not let me know that he was in London. I asked him to write me a note directly he arrived, for I wished, with his assistance, to have made some further inquiries into this very business of the will. Did you hear of his calling, Helen, or get any note?"

"A note!" said Lacy. "I dare say it is one I have in my pocket for you. I quite forgot it till this moment, but the landlord of the house in Piccadilly gave it to me, begging I would give it to you, and saying that the person who delivered it wished it to reach you soon. I really beg pardon for having forgotten it."

Colonel Adair took it and tore it open. "Yes," he said, "it is from Green, and he seems to have got some further information, for he begs me to call upon him to-night; but that my situation prevents. Read it, Lacy; what can we do in the affair?"

Lacy read. "Mr. Green," the note ran, "will be very much obliged if Colonel Adair will call upon him, in the course of this evening, at the house of Mrs. Milsome, No. 16, ——— Street, Bloomsbury, upon business of very

great importance to Colonel Adair himself. If he delays till Monday he may come a day after the fair."

"A very odd note, indeed," said Lacy, "and certainly very unfortunate that you cannot go. But Mr. Snipes cannot be long now ere he makes his appearance, and then the matter here will be very soon settled."

"But even then I must take Helen home before I can go," said Colonel Adair, "and it will be past eleven before I could reach Bloomsbury."

"If you will go to Green about this business," he said, "you will, I acknowledge, very much oblige me. Delayed till Monday I might, as he says, come a day after the fair, and I will risk no loss now-a-days."

"I will go immediately," replied Lacy, "and let you know the result as I return."

"No, no!" said Colonel Adair, "that is too much, Lacy. I can well wait till to-morrow. Helen is fatigued, and I wish her to retire to such rest as she can get in this horrid abode."

"I will beg her to sit up for half an hour," said Lacy, "for as I go I will call upon Mr. Owen Snipes, good man, myself, and if I can find him will send him hither directly. But give me the note, colonel, that I may show Green that I am invested with full powers on your part."

"Of that assure him, from me," replied the old officer; and then added, suddenly grasping his friend's hand, "Lacy, I will not apologize for the trouble I give you."

"Do not," replied Lacy, "say not a word of that which you let me do for you, my dear sir; I shall make you apologize some day for that which you will not let me do—Farewell, dearest, dearest Helen."

"Farewell Charles," she answered, while her eyes ran over with bright tears; and Lacy, afraid of himself, hurried away.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

As soon as Lady Pontypool reached her niece's house, after leaving Lord Methwyn's, she proceeded to the drawing-room, where Major Kennedy was lying on the sofa, slowly recovering from his wounds, with Lady Mary at that moment reading to him. When her aunt entered,

however, Mary paused, and laid down her book, looking intently in Lady Pontypool's face. That face was just then peculiarly radiant, for Lord Methwyn was the last man in the world to let my Aunt Pontypool know how he intended to proceed upon the information which he received from her; and as he had declared that it was the most natural thing in the world for young people to fall in love with each other, vowed that he had done so every five minutes during the fifth and sixth lustres of his years, and joked Lady Pontypool manfully upon her own love affairs in times gone by, the good lady left him with a full conviction that he was the best-tempered man in the world, and would do all he could to make Lacy and Helen as happy or happier than ever two people so circumstanced were before. From the air of triumphant satisfaction which beamed on my Aunt Pontypool's lip, Lady Mary augured evil to some of her ladyship's friends; but Mary was not in spirits to inquire, and when Lady Pontypool saw how her niece was engaged she merely said a few words and quitted the room. In about three quarters of an hour, however, her meditations were disturbed by her maid, who informed her that Adjutant Green, who had been inquiring for her while she was out, had now returned.

"Show him into the library," said Lady Pontypool, and thither she proceeded to confer with him. What the subject of their conversation was remained a mystery, for no one was admitted to share in their solemn conference.

Very shortly after, Lady Pontypool, having put on her bonnet and shawl, and made herself look as imposing as possible, walked out, followed by her own peculiar fat footman, and took the way to Hill Street, Berkeley Square.

"Pray, is Mr. Williamson at home?" demanded Lady Pontypool of the servant who opened the door.

"Yes, ma'am, he is at home," replied the man, "but he told me he could see no one, when those two gentlemen went away; for they left him in a terrible way, any how."

"But indeed, if he be at home, I must see him," said Lady Pontypool; "I have come upon business of importance, which must be done to-day."

"Oh, then, I dare say, he will see you," replied the servant.

Lady Pontypool was accordingly shown into the dining-room—not where we have already seen the lawyer taking his solitary dinner, but into that where, on plate and in

splendour, Mr. Williamson had been accustomed, during the last two years, to entertain those young gentlemen who had, or were to have, large fortunes. There she sat herself down, and in a few minutes in walked Mr. Williamson, with the traces of much agitation—much more, indeed, than his mailed countenance had ever exhibited before—still visible in his face.

"You see me under great distress of mind, Lady Pontypool," he said abruptly; "I told the servant not to let any one in; but he knew I should be glad to see your ladyship. I have met with a great loss, Lady Pontypool, a terrible loss."

"I know that, sir?" replied my Aunt Pontypool, "that is exactly what I came to speak with you about."

"Indeed, madam!" said Mr. Williamson, somewhat surprised; "very kind of you, I am sure. I did not know you were aware of my poor boy's death."

"Death! goodness, no!" said Lady Pontypool; "I mistook—I thought it was about the robbery of your house, and the loss of the will, you were speaking."

"No, madam!" said Mr. Williamson, sharply; "I certainly was not speaking of any such thing!"—but then remembering himself immediately, and with his curiosity not a little roused, he added, "but your ladyship said you came about the robbery of my house; may I ask what you can know about it?"

"Oh, I did not mean exactly the robbery," replied Lady Pontypool, who, to use one of the most expressive terms of the Hibernian vernacular, was becoming bothered, "I meant about the will which you have lost."

"What will, madam?" demanded Mr. Williamson, who loved no assumptions.

"Oh! I mean the last will which Lord Adair made—the grandfather of the present man," replied Lady Pontypool, in the most straightforward manner in the world: "the will that you and the present man concealed."

Mr. Williamson gazed at her, extremely puzzled; for he could not in the least tell whether her reply was dictated by profound art or profound simplicity. "I see I have been calumniated, madam," he replied; "I know of no will made by the late Lord Adair, but that which is at Doctors' Commons. But I understand the matter very well, madam; Captain Lacy and Mr. Henry Adair, after having called here to bully me, have gone on to you."

"Captain Lacy and Henry Adair!" cried Lady Pontypool, with a glow of satisfaction in her countenance, which

at once undeceived Mr. Williamson: "are they in town? Why, Lord Methwyn told me that they had not arrived. Oh, we shall soon get to the bottom of this business now. I am so glad, for it must be concluded to-night."

"What must, ~~madam~~?" demanded the lawyer.

"Oh, that does not much signify now," replied Lady Pontypool; "I thought it all rested upon me, and I was willing to do the best I could, to save pain of all kinds. In fact, coming to you, sir, was to make you an offer which might spare you a great deal hereafter; but it does not matter now."

"Indeed, my lady," replied Mr. Williamson, who saw that there was information in Lady Pontypool's breast, derived from a different source to that which had furnished hints to Lacy and Henry Adair; and was consequently very anxious to hear all, or more, than she was likely to tell. "Indeed, my lady, but it does matter; you have made me no proposal—I am always happy to receive any proposal."

"The proposal I had to make you, sir," replied Lady Pontypool, "was simply this—that, if you would act like an honest man—which I dare say you are inclined to do—and come forward, and tell me all about the will, everything that is past shall be forgotten, and nothing said about it; and I will give you two thousand pounds out of my own pocket, though I dare say my cousin Adair will pay me again."

This was a proposal which Mr. Williamson certainly did not at all expect; and for once in her life, my Aunt Pontypool's calculations were so far in the right, that her offer staggered Mr. Williamson, and by throwing in certain immunity, the removal of apprehension, and two thousand pounds, into the right scale, gave the balance of his mind a leaning towards honesty, which it had never had before in his life. But habit, hope, and the grasping, greedy spirit natural to his heart, prevailed: he ran over in his mind the shame of confession, the improbability of any party being able to shield his name from obloquy, the certain loss of Lord Adair's agency and its enormous profits, the chances of being thoroughly exposed, disgraced, and obliged to fly; and adding to these considerations, the seducing hopes of obtaining the paper himself, he mentally rubbed his hands, and made up his mind to his course.

Lady Pontypool saw him pause, and thinking to confirm him in right, she said, "Well, Mr. Williamson, you

had better decide. The matter must be settled this very night; and by giving a very little sum more than what I offer you, I can get the original paper, for it has been offered to me this very day. Then Colonel Adair will have his own, and our sweet Helen will bring Charles the splendid fortune she should always have had."

The image which she presented to him of the happiness of Colonel Adair,—of him whom he hated with the peculiar hatred of the man who hath done the wrong,—of him whom he hated on account of chastisement merited and received;—and still more, the image of Helen Adair, who had scorned and rejected his dead son, going a wealthy and an honoured bride to the arms of a noble and affectionate husband, petrified his heart in an instant, and left there engraven his evil resolutions in characters not to be effaced. And he determined, as it appeared that no time was to be lost, to spend one half of his ill-gotten wealth rather than fail now.

"I have been considering, Lady Pontypool," he replied, as soon as his fit of meditation was over, how it can have happened that you, and two or three other respectable people, have been so completely imposed upon. As I said before, I know of no such will as that you speak of; and in answer to your proposal, which is in fact an insult, I shall give you two pieces of advice,—one applicable to the particular business in regard to which designing people are about to cheat you, and the other of a more general nature. The first is, always take care what you are about, and never give away two, or even one, thousand pounds for a paper, the authenticity of which you are not sure of"

"Ay, but Adjutant Green knows his own handwriting!" interrupted Lady Pontypool.

Mr. Williamson paused suddenly at that name; but the next moment he went on again: "I dare say he does, madam,—but I know that no such will exists; and therefore my second piece of advice to your ladyship is, never to meddle with business that does not concern you, for depend upon it you will get thanks from no one."

Lady Pontypool rose with an air of offended dignity, and without another word walked out of the house.

"Run to Bow Street as fast as you can," said Mr. Williamson, calling to his servant as soon as he had shut the door, "and beg them to send me down either Ruthven or Smithers, or old Townsend, or some one, directly."

The man obeyed with alacrity; but scarcely was he

gone, when a single tap at the door echoed through the passage. It was a messenger from the bailiff, to announce that Colonel Adair had been arrested. "That will do!" said Mr. Williamson, rubbing his hands; "now, if I can get two or three more detainers against him on Monday—it is capital that it is on a Saturday night, for he cannot even get bail on Sunday. Capital! I shall do for them yet!" and Mr. Williamson applied himself to a bottle of port wine.

The officer who followed the messenger of Mr. Williamson to Hill Street, was one who, with a flaxen wig, nankeen breeches, clean white stockings, and gaiters, and upon his head, slanting at an angle of forty-five, a broad-brimmed, low-crowned hat, might be seen in those days strutting up many a street in London. Old Townsend, indeed, was then somewhat past his prime, and only did a little business occasionally from old affection for the trade: but he now very willingly came down to speak with Mr. Williamson, as the matter he knew to be one more requiring wit and experience than activity or strength.

"Sit down, and take a glass of wine, Townsend," said Mr. Williamson, as soon as he came in; "I have sent for you to see if we cannot get hold of this third fellow, who has hitherto escaped us."

"Why, Lord, Mr. Williamson!" replied Townsend, in his peculiar fat voice; "you are an old hand, and know these matters as well as I do. You know that every man must have his time, unless he be very outrageous. I've nothing to do with this affair, you know; but the gentlemen who have must let him weigh his weight, I fancy. He's a young hand, it seems, and this is his first job. You've got the two old 'uns, so what signifies?"

"Why it signifies a great deal to me, Townsend," replied Williamson; "for he has got something of mine that I want to get back."

"Well, that'll be easily managed without troubling the gentleman," answered the officer; "I dare say I can get it back for you for a trifle, if you'll tell me exactly what it is."

"Well then, Townsend," said the lawyer, "I'll give the four hundred down for the fellow, over and above the reward offered, if he can be caught this very night: and if you can get the paper into my hand to-night, I will give you two hundred for your own pains."

"That's liberal enough," said Townsend: "pray what may the paper be, sir?"

"That is nothing to anybody," replied Mr. Williamson; "it is nothing but a paper between me and one of my clients, that he would not have seen for the world. He has been a little wild and foolish or so; you know a lawyer has many of these things to do."

"O yes, sir!" replied the officer, with a grin. "However, the only way to manage the matter is for you to go with us. I'll be beside you. We'll have plenty of people, so that there will be no danger; and while we are examining all the things, you can take what belongs to yourself, and say nothing about it. But the time is so short. I do not think our people know who it is—I don't think they have ever inquired much; then they will have to find out where he is; the time is very short, Mr. Williamson."

"Do you know a man called Adjutant Green?" demanded Williamson.

Townsend started. "To be sure," he said. "I saw him at the Horse Guards this morning; but bless you, sir, he has nothing to do with it! he's not upon the lay. If you had said his brother, Bill Green, the boxer, indeed, then I might have said something to you, for he was hard up we know some time ago, and has got amongst bad hands."

"Well, but suppose I do say him?" said Williamson. "You are on the right scent, Townsend; follow it out! But remember it must be to-night."

"O, if it be Billy Green," replied the officer, "we'll soon have him. However, you stay at home here, sir! Do not stir till you see me again. I will go out and get things together; and when all is ready I will come for you."

While this laudable arrangement was going on, Lady Pontypool had returned home, and found Lady Mary and Major Kennedy, with Louisa Green, Helen Adair's maid, before them, recapitulating the tale of Colonel Adair's arrest upon a fictitious claim; and Lady Pontypool instantly began to propose and imagine all manner of things. But Lady Mary put her two hands upon the worthy lady's arms, exclaiming, "No, no, my dear Aunt Pontypool, I will manage this matter myself! Who can we send, Kennedy?"

Ere he could reply, however, Lady Pontypool chimed in. "My dear Mary," she said, "you do not know that Charles Lacy is in town, and I understood that he was coming here. When he comes he will go himself, depend upon it."

Lady Mary and her wounded husband thought the suggestion not a bad one, and, consequently, Louisa Green was kept to tell her whole tale to Lacy when he did come ; but hour after hour went by without his making his appearance, and Lady Mary at length sent a messenger to Lord Methwyn's, to beg that her cousin would come over to her directly. The servant returned with the news that Captain Lacy had just gone out ; and in five minutes after, a sharp, impatient knock at the door made the whole party believe that he had come thither of his own free will. A moment undeceived them, for it was speedily announced that Mr. Henry Adair waited in the library. He would not come up, the servant said, but wished to know if Lady Pontypool could give him the address of Adjutant Green.

Lady Pontypool declared that she would go down and speak with him, and Lady Mary, however she might commiserate him, could not prevent her aunt from doing as she liked. The good lady's conference with Henry Adair was a great deal more lengthy than either Lady Mary or Major Kennedy liked, but at length it concluded, and as she parted with her young visitor she was heard to say, "Well, I would go directly if I were you, for it is getting late ; and as I told you before, you may hear of something to-night which to-morrow may be lost irremediably. I must not say what, for I promised not."

"I shall certainly go to-night," replied Henry Adair, "for I hope to be in Flanders before to-morrow night. What you tell me of my father but induces me to hasten thither the more eagerly. Good-night, and many thanks."

"Did you tell him where to find the colonel?" demanded Major Kennedy, as soon as Lady Pontypool made her appearance in the drawing-room.

"Oh dear, no ! I quite forgot to tell him anything about the colonel's being arrested," replied Lady Pontypool. "The truth is, I had matters of so much greater importance to speak to him about, that I forgot everything else."

Lady Mary saw that my Aunt Pontypool had got hold of a mystery, and she gave up the whole world for lost, as there was no telling, under such circumstances, where the blow might fall.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

LACY lost no time, but walked on, and at the house of Mr. Owen Snipes procured no further information than that the worthy gentleman had been sent for just as he was sitting down to tea, by a lady of rank, whose name the maid had forgotten. Lacy tried Lady Mary Denham, or Lady Mary Kennedy; but neither of the two fitted the gap in the girl's memory, and he was obliged to desist, leaving a message for Mr. Snipes, importing that that gentleman would lay Captain Lacy under infinite obligations if he would attend to the note which had been sent to him, without any regard to the lateness of the hour at which he received it.

He then proceeded on his road towards No. 16, ——— Street, Bloomsbury. Lacy knocked smartly at the door, which was slowly and cautiously opened by the boy "Bill," who had first guided him from the opera-house, and who now looked at him with prudent and considering eyes by the light of a tallow candle, which afforded no very good view of the visitor's person. "Well, William! Do you not remember me?" asked Lacy; "I am Captain Lacy."

"Oh dear, yes, sir!" answered the boy, with an air of embarrassment; "I remember you very well! My mother will be glad to see you, I dare say."

"Dare say!" said Lacy, "but never mind, my good boy, it was not her I came to see. I want to speak with your uncle about a note he wrote to Colonel Adair, who cannot come, and has sent me about the business."

"Oh!" cried the boy, seeming more embarrassed than ever; "oh dear! Is that it? If you will walk into the back shop, sir, I will call my mother."

Lacy accordingly did walk into the back shop, but ere Mrs. Milsome reached it, he heard a voice, which he instantly recognised as that of Adjutant Green, calling after her, "You may ask him to come up, Mary; I will answer for the Captain's honour: I know him to be a gentleman, and he will behave as such, and act according-ly; be you sure of that."

There was something in all this business that Lacy did

not at all understand : he began—after the poor woman's first salutations, which were as humble and as grateful as any heart could have desired—to ask questions, the tendency of which was to elucidate the sort of scramble and confusion in which he found her house ; but poor Mrs. Milsome, who was in a state of agitation, which surprised Lacy as much as all the rest, replied at once, " Oh, do not ask me, sir ! they must tell you all themselves. I am afraid of making mischief. They have nearly fought to-night, and would, too, if he had not been so near death, and yet he thinks he can sail to-morrow, when he cannot stand up for two minutes without help. Pray go up, sir ! I will light you."

Lacy saw at once that his own eyes must be his further informants, and consequently he followed her up the clean, but narrow stairs. On the second floor the boy William was standing, looking in a great fright, but Lacy could hear him whisper as he went past, " They are all quiet now. Mrs. Milsome looked glad, but walked on, and opening the door of one of the attics, presented Lacy with a scene which his imagination certainly had not forestalled.

The month was August ; nevertheless there was an immense fire in the grate, near which was a low press-bed, with the foot towards the fire-place, and seated on that foot, instead of a chair, with his hands and knees curled up into the very blaze, sat a tall powerful man, wrapped up in an immense frieze great-coat. The man wore his hair cropped short and smooth, and his features were coarse and heavy, with a bad expression superadded, which was not diminished in effect by a strong black beard, of near a week's growth. Still there was, in his countenance, a certain degree of resemblance to that of Adjutant Green, which instantly convinced Lacy that he there beheld his brother, the pugilist, who had been lying ill in the hospital when he first visited the widow Milsome.

Lacy's eye had instantly rested upon the person who was a stranger to him ; but halfway across the room stood Adjutant Green himself, who advanced, as the young officer entered, and welcomed him in frank but respectful terms. He did not offer to take Lacy's hand, but Lacy took his and shook it cordially, and then approached the fire, while William Green, who sat before it, eyed him askance as he came near, without attempting to rise.

" Well," he cried in a rude tone, gazing at Lacy from

under his heavy brows, "why did not the old man come himself? but I don't care a d—n whether he comes or sends, providing he comes down. What will he give, eh?"

"I really do not understand what you mean, sir," replied Lacy, in a cold and haughty tone. "I came hither on the part of Colonel Adair, to speak with Adjutant Charles Green concerning a note which he sent, desiring to see him here."

"Note! He sent no note!" replied the ruffian. "I sent the note. D—n him, the business is none of his, though he must needs meddle with it. But, I say, why did not the old fool come himself instead of sending a young un in his place?"

"Colonel Adair sent me, sir," said Lacy, turning, and speaking in a grave but composed manner, "to speak upon some business with a person he believed could behave like a gentleman, and would treat me as such; and if I do not find that I have such a person to deal with, I will not undertake the task, though Colonel Adair cannot come himself."

"Well, well, I don't want to treat you unlike a gentleman," replied the other; "come, sit down by the fire, for it is cursed cold, and tell me what the colonel will give."

"Give!" said Lacy, "I do not understand what you mean. Give, for what? There is all that Colonel Adair has heard of the business—it is, I suppose, your own note."

"Ay, but did not the old woman tell him?" cried the other, turning towards his brother. "There! you see how you have mismanaged all this business. Why there will be twenty people know the whole story before to-morrow morning. You'll get me hanged, I'll be d——d if you don't, with your foolery. If you'd let me manage my own way, and bring my own goods to market, I'd get off clear, and make a pretty fortune of it, to settle across the water with; but if they once get wind of my being about to bolt, they'll hang me to-morrow, though I have not had half my time."

"Your own goods!" retorted Adjutant Green. "Do you call that your own goods that you stole from another? I'll tell you what, William, sooner than you should carry that paper out of England with you, I'd cut you down myself, as soon as look at you, and if ever you got up again, your head would be harder than a Frenchman's helmet."

The other set his teeth hard, and shook his fist at him,

saying, in a low deep voice, "You know I am hurt, or you dare not say that. But I'll teach you better some day."

"On my honour, as a gentleman and a soldier," said Lacy, "I will use no information, which you may think it right to give me, to your detriment in any way."

"Well, you shall be told," answered the other—"you shall be told, though my wind is devilish short; so he had better tell it to you," and he pointed to his brother.

"The truth is, sir," said Adjutant Green, in a grave and indignant tone, "that when I arrived in town yesterday, I found my sister Mary here, in a terrible state, with fear and sorrow, sir, and I asked her what was the matter. It was a long time before she would tell, but at last she confessed that this unfortunate man, sir——"

"D—d unfortunate, indeed," muttered the other, "for I've got a shot in my back-bone, that would have been better in yours."

This was said, however, in such a tone as not to interrupt his brother, who went on, "that this unfortunate man, who had never been near her since he got well, because his cursed bull-dogs had been sold, came to hide himself in her house, five or six nights ago, all bleeding and hurt——"

"Ay, a fool she was, to tell you all that," burst forth the other. "Tell him about the paper, and nothing more."

"Well, sir, he talked of going to America, and told me that he had got hold of a paper that would make his fortune, when he got there—for he knew all about the good old colonel's having lost the India fortune, on account of the will, better than I did, for he had been in England, and often down in that part of the country, and I had always been on foreign service—but, however, I made him tell me what it was, and he showed me the very will which I signed myself as a witness. But I forgot," he added, "you do not know all about the will."

"Yes!" said Lacy, "I know all about it—I know that you witnessed it, and that it was concealed and kept by that villain Williamson. I could even tell your brother the very box and drawer from which he took it, in the little back parlour, when he broke into the house."

"The devil you could!" cried the wounded man, half starting up; "then there is no use of hiding anything from him—so tell him all."

"Well, sir, when I found that," said Green, "I told him he should do no such thing as carry that out of England

with him, and we had a long dispute, sir, for he wanted to make a fortune by it, sir; and I wanted him to give it up to those who had a right to it. But he said no; if the colonel wanted the will he should pay for it, and that if he gave the old gentleman back twenty thousand a year or so, he could well afford to give him ten thousand pounds down."

"To be sure," interrupted the other, "and so I say still; and I'll tell you what, Captain Lacy, I'd sooner take the will and put it in that ere fire than give it you for a farthing less—I'd do it as soon as look at you."

"Louisa," continued the adjutant, "had been here to see her mother, poor Mary there, and had told where Colonel Adair lived, and William there had sent off a note to him, with his own hand; so I told him that I dared to say he would come ready to settle the business at once. However, nobody did come all the evening, and he was talking of getting into a hackney to-morrow at four, and going off for the ship, and taking the will with him, and that was what we were quarrelling about when you came in, sir."

At that moment there was a slight noise heard below, and the boy, Bill, ran in to say that there was a knock at the street-door. William Green glared round with the terrors of guilt upon him; but Lacy relieved him by saying, "I dare say it is Colonel Adair himself. He could not come when I left him, because he was detained by a matter which could not be otherwise managed; but I begged him to come himself as soon as he could."

"Well, open the door, Bill," said his uncle. "If it is an elderly gentleman of the name of Adair, let him come up; but mind what you are about now."

"Oh, I'll mind," said the boy, and away he went, closing the door behind him.

A few minutes then elapsed in silence, but then there was a sound below, as if some heavy thing had fallen, and then the noise of feet running up stairs. The steps were not those of one person—no, nor of two. They were light, it is true, and seemed taken cautiously, to avoid noise, but still they were many, that was evident; and the face of the housebreaker changed paler and paler. There suddenly came over it a dark red flush, while his brow-knit, and his white teeth were seen clenched between his quivering lips. "I am betrayed," he said, turning towards Lacy, and stamping with his foot, "I am betrayed! but d—n me if ever any one shall be the better for it! There!" and he cast the will at once into the blazing fire.

Lacy and Adjutant Green both started forward to snatch it from the flames; but animated by passion and despair he cast himself in their way, exclaiming, "No, no! I say. stand off, or by —— I'll shoot you!"

He had snatched a brace of large holster pistols from the bed where they had been lying beside him; but neither Green nor Lacy would have recoiled from them. had not the paper, which was old and dry, caught fire in a moment, and blazed up into a flame, that left no chance of saving it. There was a momentary struggle between the two brothers, during which Lacy could not pass, but that struggle was enough, and before the young officer could force his way across, the paper had curled up into a black and meaningless cinder. Adjutant Green saw its fate, too, and unclasping his brother from the grasp with which he had endeavoured to put him aside, he turned to look towards the door, which was now opening.

"Oh God! oh God! they have come to take him indeed!" cried Mrs. Milsome, running into one corner of the room, while Lacy and the gallant soldier drew a step back, leaving the ruffian standing alone before the fire, his dark face swelled with the excitement of passion, and his eyes rolling over the group of several faces that presented itself in the door-way.

"Ay, d—n ye, old Williamson!" he cried, as his eye lighted upon the lawyer, who was the first that presented himself, hurrying on in hopes of possessing himself of the paper. "There is for you!" and levelling a pistol towards the door, he fired. The lawyer bounded up a foot from the ground, and fell back amongst the others, who, in general, recoiled at the pistol shot; but one young man ran on. The ruffian levelled his second pistol, but Lacy sprang upon him, and strove to grasp his arm. He did, indeed, shake his aim, but ere the young officer could wrench the pistol from his hand, it too was fired, and Henry Adair fell back upon the floor. He sprang up again in a moment, however, and rushed upon the house-breaker, who was struggling with Lacy, but was nearly overpowered, for though naturally a much stronger man than the young officer, his momentary strength, which was derived alone from despair and rage, was yielding every moment under the debility which had followed his former wounds. He was now in an instant mastered, and some of the Bow Street officers running up—while others raised up the lawyer—secured their prize.

"Adair, you are hurt," said Lacy: "I hope not seriously.

"Nothing, nothing!" replied Henry Adair; "but what is all this business about, for I do not well know. Have you got the paper?"

"No!" replied Lacy, with a tone of bitter disappointment. "No; there it lies! The villain has burned it!"

"Well, it matters not," answered Henry Adair; "I will act as if it existed; but if I saw right, that villain Williamson has met his reward. I went to Lady Pontypool, and then waited an hour for you, as you promised to rejoin me; but finding that you did not appear, I came on here, according to Lady Pontypool's directions. When I knocked at the door to inquire for Charles Green, Williamson and two other men came up, and when he saw me he wanted to persuade me not to go in, for that they were going to take up a desperate housebreaker; but I suspected his object, and would go too, when all the other officers came up, and the door was opened. He hurried on first however, and up that dark and narrow staircase I could hardly keep pace with him; but he has met his reward. But, now, who is this desperate man they have just taken?"

"He is my unfortunate brother, Mr. Henry," replied Charles Green, coming forward; "that was the reason that I did not help the captain when he sprang upon him. My heart turned cold at the thought of having a hand in the taking of my mother's child."

William Green was taken to a place of security, where of course but little accommodation would be found for one so severely wounded as he had been. The surgeon pronounced immediately that the wound he had received some days before, was now, in consequence of neglect, in a complete state of mortification; and certified, for the satisfaction of the magistrates, that he could not be brought up for examination. Before the magistrates had assembled, indeed, he was speechless; and before they separated he was dead.

In the meanwhile, the Bow Street officers who remained after he had been sent away, made a strict examination and search of Mrs. Milsome's premises, taking away a great many articles belonging to their prisoner, and a great many which did not belong to him at all. Henry Adair, Adjutant Green, and Charles Lacy, proceeded first to the room below, into which the lawyer had been carried, and where he was now stretched upon a sofa, quite dead; the ball having been sent with unerring aim straight through his head. As they were standing gazing with

several others who came in with the officers, upon the spectacle which the dead body presented, Lacy perceived something slowly dropping on the gray drugget, with which the room was covered, from the coat of Henry Adair. "Good God!" he exclaimed; "it is blood! How could you tell me, Adair, that you were not hurt?"

"I hardly felt it at the time," replied Henry Adair; "but my shoulder is beginning to burn a good deal, and to feel very stiff. I wish, my man," he added, turning to a lad who stood near, "that you would have the goodness to call a surgeon; for as I must go off early to-morrow, it may be as well to stop this bleeding."

The surgeon came, and the ball was found to be lodged just below the external joint of the collar-bone. It was extracted immediately, and with no great difficulty; but the surgeon directed that his young patient should be conveyed to his hotel, and instantly go to bed, there to remain as quiet as possible for several days. The next morning, however, when he called, he found that Henry Adair, confirmed in his resolution of going at once to Brussels by the information he had received from Adjutant Green the night before, had set out at five o'clock in the morning.

It fell to the task of Lacy to communicate to Colonel Adair the events of which we have just given an imperfect sketch; but he found him reinstated in his lodgings in Piccadilly by the efforts of Mr. Owen Snipes, who had reached Chancery Lane shortly after Charles Lacy had left it. Helen was not in the room into which Lacy was shown; and it was in vain that the lover attempted to move the old officer upon all those points which we have seen discussed between them on their last meeting.

"I will tell you what, Lacy," he said at length; "my child's happiness, and yours, my dear friend, are objects of the deepest interest to me; but I cannot sacrifice my principles. However, I am about to go into the country for a short time, whenever I have seen the Commander-in-chief: before that, I wish you would abstain from seeing Helen. She shall write to you, if you like; but in six months, if you still hold your purpose towards her, and your father will condescend to ask her of me for your wife, come down and join us in Warwickshire, and I will oppose no more."

They were hard conditions, but Lacy was forced to consent; and in two days after, Colonel Adair and Helen quitted London. Ere a week more passed, the old officer was raised to the rank of general, and that, with the pros-

pect of future honours, Lacy evidently saw affected much the views of his own father.

Not long after, Charles Lacy received a letter from Henry Adair, announcing his father's death, and telling his friend, who he knew was anxious on his account, that his wound was completely healed. He also conveyed, in the same letter, to Colonel Adair, his distinct proposal to restore all that part of the family property which his father had unjustly possessed. His offer, however, was decidedly declined, without a hope being held out that it would ever be acceded to.

In the meanwhile, Helen and Lacy corresponded regularly, though what their letters contained remains sealed within their own bosoms. At length, however, within a month of the end of that probationary time which her father had appointed, Lacy's letters suddenly ceased, and for a fortnight Helen remained in pain and apprehension. At the end of that time, however, as she sat at the breakfast-table, tremblingly watching the post-bag as it was put into her father's hands, there appeared a letter, certainly in Lacy's hand, bearing the post-mark, "Nice."

"What can this mean?" said her father, first looking at the black seal, and then reading the direction—"To Major-General the Right Honourable Lord Adair."

"My dear sir," wrote Charles Lacy, "to both my beloved Helen and yourself, the date of this letter (Nice) will afford some surprise; and the tidings which it bears will, I know, to your kind and generous hearts, be as painful as if no accession of worldly rank, and no increase of fortune, were to follow. I have to communicate to you, that my poor friend Henry Adair died at this place in the course of last night. The excessive fatigue which he encountered about six months ago, various colds which he caught, by total neglect of himself, a wound, which, before he attended to it, had drained him dreadfully of blood; and I believe, more than all, great depression of spirits on account of his father's conduct in the matter of the will, and also grief for his death, which he had hastened, as he believed, by a letter upon that business, had thrown him into an ill state of health, which ended in consumption. I had heard from him two or three times since he left England; but he never mentioned that he was ill, till in his last letter he begged me, the moment I received it, to put myself into a carriage and come to him, if I wished to see him alive.

"A note was enclosed by his servant from the phy-

sician, who accompanied him to Nice, telling me that my friend having communicated to him the request he had sent to me, he thought it but fair to say that I need not make the attempt to reach him, as there was scarcely a possibility of his living even till I received his letter. I did make the attempt, however, and travelled night and day, which has been the cause of my not having written to my beloved Helen. Though that apparent neglect was a mortification, yet I had the satisfaction of arriving before my poor friend closed his eyes, and spent with him the last eight hours of his life. He was sensible to the last, perfectly satisfied to die—I should even say glad; and retained all those high and noble feelings which so much distinguished him through life, to the very close of existence. He expressed but one desire to me, which was, that a lock of his hair might be cut off and sent to Helen, with a request that she would wear it in a locket, ‘for the sake of one who had loved her well.’ I use his own words, and hope she will comply, for we must both mourn for one so amiable and noble-minded.

“His will had been made long before I arrived. It is very brief; and, after appointing me executor, it proceeds to assign a few legacies, and then names you as residuary legatee.

“Shall I congratulate you, my dear sir? No, I will not! I am now about to lie down to take a few hours’ rest, and by the next post will write to my own Helen. As soon as all the sad business which remains to be performed here is over, I will fly to claim your promise, and her hand, for the time you prescribed is past; and before I left town”—and there was a long dash under the four last words—“before I left town, my father had promised me to go down himself to ask her for me at your hands.

“In the meantime, believe me,

“My dear Sir,

“Yours ever affectionately,

“CHARLES LACY.”

“Married on the 25th, at St. George’s, Hanover Square, by the Very Reverend the Dean of Chester, Major the Honourable Charles Lacy, only son of Viscount Methuen, to Miss Adair, only daughter of Major-General Lord Adair.”

